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ABSTRACT

This unit, designed for use in both history and English classes, uses excerpts from novels as a way to view Nigerian culture and history through the eyes of its people. The literature used comes primarily from the work of two of Nigeria's important novelists: Chinua Achebe and Buchi Emecheta. Both offer views from the Igbo culture of southeast Nigeria, and their characters and themes transcend this region to encompass experiences common to many Africans. The unit includes activities and questions to allow students the opportunity to analyze African literature. Different historical periods are represented so that students may examine Nigerian culture at different times and may determine areas of change and areas of continuity. A glossary of terms, a 21-item bibliography, and a curriculum evaluation form also are included. (DB)

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TWO VOICES FROM NIGERIA

NIGERIA THROUGH THE LITERATURE OF CHINUA ACHEBE AND BUCHI EMECHETA



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Littlefield Center, Room 14, 300 Lasuen Street
Stanford University
Stanford, California 94305-5013
☎ (415) 723-1114

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TWO VOICES FROM NIGERIA:

NIGERIA THROUGH THE LITERATURE
OF
CHINUA ACHEBE and BUCHI EMECHETA

The world is like a mask dancing:
if you want to see it well,
you do not stand in one place

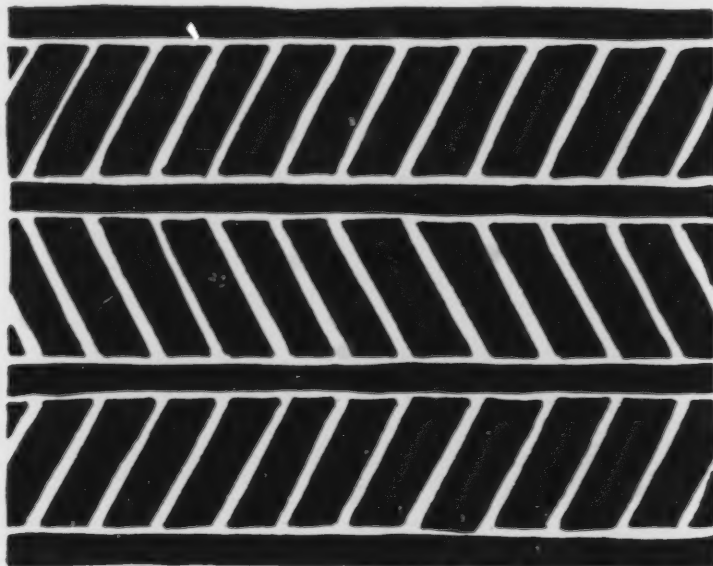
Stanford Program
on
International and Cross-Cultural Education
The Africa Project

Developed by
Lyn Reese, Curriculum Developer, Berkeley, California
Rick Clarke, Academic Dean, Marin Academy, San Rafael, California

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Editor: Laurence Becker
Coordinator, Africa Project/SPICE

Authors:

Lyn Reese, curriculum developer; travelled to Nigeria in 1984, other publications include: "Resist! Survival Tactics of Indian Women", California History, California Historical Society, spring 1984, co-authored with Victoria Brady and Sarah Crome; I'm On My Way Running: Women Speak On Coming of Age, Avon, spring 1983 (anthology); In Search of Our Past: Six Units in Women's History, U.S. Department of Health and Welfare, 1979; Sources of Strength: Women and Culture, A Teacher's Guide, U.S. Department of Health and Welfare, 1978.

Rick Clarke, Academic Dean, Marin Academy, San Rafael, California; travelled to Nigeria in 1984; taught English and social studies for four years in the San Francisco Unified School District, six years at the Marin Academy.

Production Assistants: Joan Froehlich, Tami Gideon, Debbie Leck

Graphics: Rich Cardona

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INTRODUCTION

This is a flexible unit designed for use in both history and English classes. Each activity or set of readings may be used independently. The unit includes readings, classroom activities, and extensive background information for the teacher.

The unit primarily uses excerpts from novels as a way to view Nigerian culture and history through the eyes of its people. History teachers may wish to use only those readings which are appropriate for specific themes or periods they cover. For example, the readings on the colonial period may be used to assess the perceptions of those being colonized and to learn more about the process of colonization. In literature classes the readings, activities and questions may be used to examine the themes and style of African writers. In the process students may be motivated to read the entire novel. For both disciplines the selections offer an opportunity to read Nigerian literature, become involved with interesting characters and be introduced to a fascinating world best described by its storytellers.

The literature used primarily comes from the work of two of Nigeria's important novelists: Chinua Achebe and Buchi Emecheta. Both offer views from the Igbo culture of southeast Nigeria, but their characters and themes transcend this region to encompass experiences common to many Africans. The unit is unique in that it includes selections from a male and female writer to ensure representation of the experiences of both worlds.

Included in the unit are activities and questions to allow students the opportunity to analyze African literature. Different historical periods are represented so that students may examine Nigerian culture at different times and may determine areas of change and areas of continuity.

We encourage students to read at least one complete novel. The major works of Chinua Achebe and Buchi Emecheta are summarized in the essay on African Literature.

The novels of Chinua Achebe are in paperback. U.S. distributors:

African Writers Series
Heinemann Educational Books, Inc.
70 Court St.
Portsmouth, New Hampshire 13801

The novels of Buchi Emecheta are in paperback. U.S. distributors:

George Braziller, Inc.
One Park Ave.
New York, NY 10016

WHAT DISTINGUISHES AFRICAN LITERATURE?

The African literary tradition is primarily oral, except in the north and on the east coast where there is an ancient tradition of writing. This is a rich heritage which uses a variety of ways to express the thoughts and feelings of the people. Through oral expression religious teachings, praise songs, love poetry, epic and heroic events have been conveyed. Myths, proverbs, riddles, fables, family and community histories also have been handed down from generation to generation. While the young memorized a large body of the material, special people usually were trained to accurately record important events. In the modern world it is the African writer who has become a major recorder of contemporary events. Modern writing often contains both elements of the African oral literature and an accurate description of modern history.

The extensive use of the written word and the development of an African literary profession based on Western models began in the 19th century. Authors faced the problem of writing in a second language and had to mold their portrayal of African ways into the constraints of European literary styles. In spite of these obstacles a large body of writings has been produced which offers an "authentic" African voice. One reason is many artists have looked with respect upon their own cultures and materials, and use them more effectively than any outsider could. They liberally infuse their writings with folktales, proverbs, songs and moral tales. For example, Achebe attributes proverbs and wise sayings to "Eneke the bird." Authors also create characters who are presented as the storytellers. Or they acknowledge the important role of storytelling in contemporary Africa, as does Buchi Emecheta in her novel, Naira Power:

"Even though in the cities adults still had time to tell stories to their children. They told folk-tales, but when they ran out of tales of old heroes they turned to stories about living."

At times it has been the writer, not the historian, who has most clearly recorded a country's major events. African writers are deeply influenced by their social, economic and political situations under which they live. Their novels often tell the story of their people's initial exposure to the West and how they reacted to colonialism. For example, Ousmane Sembene's novel, God's Bits of Wood, is known to be the best description of the Senegalese strike against the French including the women's part in this resistance.

Writers also address the problems of the impact of Western influences, such as urbanization, Western education, migrations, and adaptation to a different lifestyle. They write about politics, the independence movements and problems following nationhood. These are issues that may not exist in the West and are often presented in a personal way through the lives and relationships of fictional characters. The work of Buchi Emecheta and Chinua Achebe vividly deals with these issues.

CHINUA ACHEBE AND BUCHI EMECHETA
AND THEIR NOVELS

Achebe and Emecheta are contemporary writers whose people are Igbo, an ethnic group from southeastern Nigeria. Chinua Achebe is a better known author but Buchi Emecheta, twelve years his junior, increasingly is becoming one of Africa's foremost female writers. Both offer views of the Igbo experience in Nigeria from the late 19th century to today. At the same time their works reflect important differences between the male and the female experience. Since their writings present characters and themes which transcend their Igbo locale, both authors offer us insights into issues which are common not only to the experiences of Nigerians in general, but also throughout sub-Saharan Africa.

Chinua Achebe:

Chinua Achebe was born soon after the harvest season, November 16, 1930, in Ogidi, Nigeria. He went to a primary school in the Church Missionary Society, in which his father was a catechist. His first acquaintance with English came at about age eight. At fourteen, he was selected by an excellent school, the Government College at Umuahia. He then went on to University College, Ibadan, to study medicine. He studied at Ibadan from 1948-53 but decided to leave medicine and read Literature. In 1961 Achebe was appointed first director of External Broadcasting in Nigeria. Following the outbreak of the Civil War, he joined the Biafran Ministry of Information. He has lectured and taught in Nigeria and has sought political office. His books have been translated into 45 languages.

Achebe is controversial. He sees his role as that of a patriotic critic, "a true patriot will always demand the highest standards of his country and accept nothing but the best from his people." Speaking of his role as a critic he has said,

"Most writers are inveterate critics of their fellow men and society--a role imposed upon them by their multiple vision, their natural skepticism, and individualism....Show a writer the glittering skyline of your expanding metropolis and he will be looking down instead into your swollen, foul smelling open drain....This is the writer's nature and strength. To wish him to be otherwise is too wish impotence upon him and to deny society the full vigor of his creativity."

Achebe is, then, the critic. He offers us a look at traditional Igbo life, at the beginnings and middle and end of the colonial experience, and at the new nationhood. For each of these periods he is both the recorder and the critic. The pictures he paints are not always pleasant, but few have criticized his skill or the accuracy of his images.

A Sampling of Achebe's Novels:

THINGS FALL APART: Achebe's first novel is set at the beginning of the 20th century as the British are beginning to penetrate Iboland. The British meet an organized, agricultural society as represented by the village Umuofia. It has a social hierarchy of gods, ancestors, elders and families. The arrival of the colonial officer and the Africans who support him bring confusion to Umuofia. The society, as reflected in the protagonist, Okonkwo, is divided. He dies, and his son converts to Christianity. The old society has been destroyed.

ARROW OF GOD: Set entirely in two adjacent Igbo village groups in 1921, Arrow of God looks at Igbo society confronted with British colonial rule. Ezeulu, the hero, is responsible for the political unity of Umuaro's six villages. At this moment in time when colonial rule is bringing great change, Achebe shows us through Ezeulu the contradictions faced by the Igbo.

NO LONGER AT EASE: This novel takes place on the eve of independence for Nigeria. The colonial world is ending and Western educated Nigerians are moving into the system as heirs apparent to the outgoing administration. Obi Okonkwo, grandson of the protagonist in Things Fall Apart, is a young man whose foreign education has disrupted his values. He has left the traditional world and returned with new values. He tries, unsuccessfully, to live and respond to both worlds.

A MAN OF THE PEOPLE: Nigeria is now in the throes of the new age. Gone is the image of village Africa. This is the New Nigeria - electoral, but with huge problems. Gone is the spiritual; enter the material. Everything is politics. And politics is complex and corrupt. The bureaucracy responds to political pressure, and the system allows the same kind of despotic rule as was found under colonialism.

Buchi Emecheta:

Buchi Emecheta was born in 1944 in a small village on the outskirts of Lagos, Nigeria's capital. Her father was a railway worker and her mother farmed and raised five children. Emecheta writes that she was "a girl who arrived when everyone was expecting and predicting a boy. They were so disappointed they did not bother to record the event." At the age of eight, she overrode the family's objections about the value of educating a girl and insisted on going to school. She asserted herself again at eleven when she refused to marry the husband her family chose for her. She finally married him at age sixteen and in 1962, with her two children, followed him to England, where he was a student. There she had three more children and took a degree in sociology. She found work and began to get up at 4 am each day to write as a way to work out the conflicts she felt being an African in London. Emecheta's development as a writer threatened the marriage. She is now divorced and has published eight novels and numerous young adult and children's books. Her novels have been translated into 15 languages.

Primarily, Emecheta's work describes the lives of working class Igbo men and women from about 1900 to the present. Her characters often manage to survive and ultimately adjust to the traumas of colonialism and contemporary

life by coming to terms with themselves. The novels are also, as she says, "seen from a female point of view." Enecheta confronts the male assumptions about women as, for example, the romantic celebration of motherhood. Her description of motherhood more realistically shows that children do not always maintain strong, loyal bonds with their mother, and that motherhood also brings with it the problems of polygamy, of childlessness, of hard work, or chaos. Enecheta defines women's position in Nigeria as being strong in certain respects of both traditional and contemporary society but submissive in others. She seeks a very Western solution by encouraging women themselves to more fully understand their situation and develop their own sense of self.

Enecheta's Novels:

THE BRIDE PRICE: This is a study of the struggle between the collective traditions of the village and Aku-nna's assertion for individual choice. She is a city girl who is forced to return to her father's village. Here traditions, shown through her participation in a series of ceremonies, make her aware of those points at which her culture delineates a woman's fate. She proceeds to fall in love with a man forbidden her, because he is the son of a former slave. When her uncle refuses to accept the bride price for her marriage, the mental and social shame is unbearable and Aku-nna loses the will to live.

Enecheta has said,

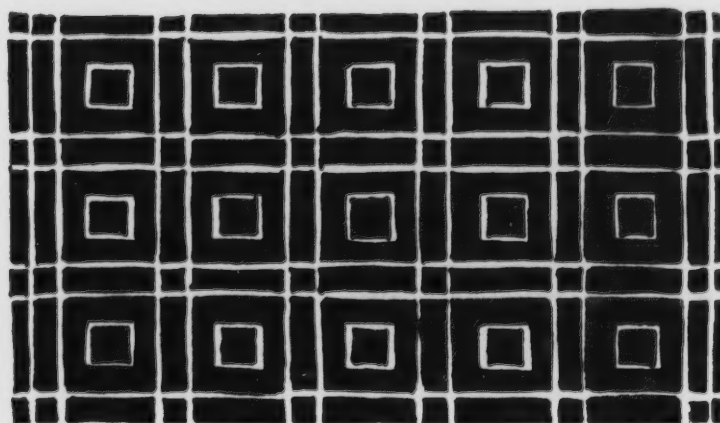
I, too, am ashamed that my bride price was not paid. Maybe my marriage failed because of that. You can see how deep certain traditions fastened themselves to your spirit. You have the feeling of being an outcast, cut off from your own background.

THE SLAVE GIRL: The book links colonial subordination and traditional slavery with the subordination of women and their treatment as possessions. Ojebeta is sold into slavery in her own land when epidemics brought by whites leave her orphaned as a child. Among her fellow slaves she finds a surrogate family, eventually is freed and marries. Set against a broad historical background beginning with the founding of her village generations before and concluding with the end of World War II, Ojebeta's life is juxtaposed with the history of slavery, the ambiguous role of Christianity, the growth of new trading centers and the alliance between wealthy African traders and their European counterparts.

THE JOYS OF MOTHERHOOD: The novel documents the changing values of three generations of Igbo women from the turn of the century through World War II. Nnu Efu, after a childless first marriage, is sent from her village to marry Nnaife, who works as a laundry man for an English family in Lagos. After bearing him nine children, she achieves the honored role of motherhood only to learn that this does not protect her from a lonely old age. She has also found village life rather idyllic compared to the city life of shanties and back breaking toil of hard work and petty trading. Although she has succumbed to the social pressures of village traditions, she comes to see their unsuitability in the demands of urban life.

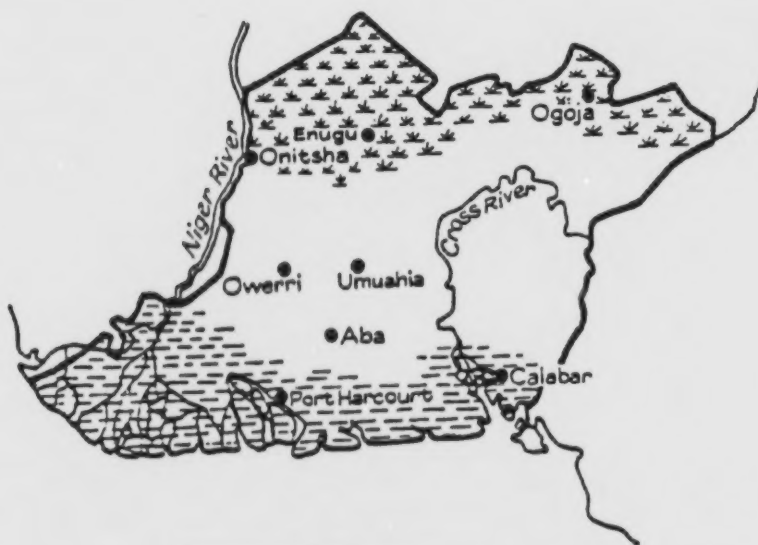
THE DOUBLE YOKE: This is set on the campus of a modern Nigerian university. It is the story of two undergraduates who are striving to meet their individual needs by overcoming sexual and societal pressures. The problems of female students and women teachers are explored in light of society's ambivalent views of "modern educated women." The story is told through the eyes of Ete, who is hoping to find a submissive wife like his mother. When his childhood girlfriend Nko enters the university, her growing sophistication unnerves him. Ete is challenged to be a "modern African man," and struggles along with Nko to define new roles for both of them.

NAIRA POWER: This was written as part of a series of books for young adults. The moral of the plot is that those who illegally seek power at the expense of family honor come to a bad end. The story is told through the eyes of a visiting relative from abroad, (Emecheta herself?) who critically examines the physical decay of the big cities and the moral decay of the new elite. Through a series of flashbacks, her sister-in-law reveals her relationship with a charming but unscrupulous crook.





Southeast Nigeria
including the states of
Anambra, Cross River, Imo, Rivers



0 20 40 60 80 100 MILES



delta, mangrove



forest



savanna

"Proverbs are the palm oil
with which words are eaten"

PROVERBS AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING CULTURAL VALUES

I. INTRODUCTION: The Use of Proverbs in African Society

Many people are aware of the use of proverbs in various cultures. They are to be found in the Bible, in the writings of Emerson, Thoreau, Franklin and so on. In Africa, however, proverbs are created and used primarily in an oral context. In written literature the listener is absent. In the oral tradition the listener is present, often being directly challenged. There is a dialogue, and an answer is usually expected. This is a very important distinction.

Proverbs often combine the beauty of poetry with the exactitude of down-to-earth observations about nature and human interaction. They may be chosen by an elder in conversation or debate not only to make a point clearer but also because proverbs are felt to be more convincing than ordinary language. They do not condemn. They teach. They carry with them the weight of long tradition. This last is perhaps the main reason why they are so convincing to African listeners. The use a proverb is often preceded by a phrase such as "As our forefathers used to say..."

Interpreting proverbs is a skill learned through practice. In this activity, the Igbo, Hausa, and Yoruba proverbs have been translated to English. That translation in some cases removed some of the important implications of the proverb. Also, the meaning of each proverb is bound to the culture from which it comes. In this activity we must remember that our interpretations are set in a U.S. cultural context and are likely to miss some meaning that Nigerians would recognize.

Proverbs must be quoted in the right context. Often, people will argue about which proverb most aptly fits the topic being discussed. They sometimes do not fit. "A head-kerchief never looks so fine as when expertly tied, but even if finely tied it may not suit a person." Knowledge and wisdom come with living and observation. A young man may know many proverbs; a wise old man will know how to use them.

This activity will help introduce students to an important element in African culture and in African literature. It should be used before students read the literature. Most of the Igbo proverbs are taken from the writings of Achebe and a few from Emecheta.

II. ACTIVITY:

- A. Students identify (list) as many proverbs as possible from their own experience. Analyze one or two as a group (i.e. "early to bed, early to rise...", "a stitch in time saves nine") to determine the underlying values. Ask students where, for whom, under what circumstances they have heard or are likely to hear such proverbs.
- B. Generalize about the values promoted in the proverbs generated by the class.
- C. Distribute the U.S. list of proverbs to the class.
 1. See where there are similarities, contradictions.
 2. Have a general discussion of U.S. values and how proverbs and sayings help transmit them to youth.
- D. (Optional) Students interview parents and grandparents about proverbs they heard as children. They should ask about the circumstances under which the proverbs were learned to illustrate the ORAL nature of proverbs.
- E. Distribute the Nigerian proverbs.
 1. Within each list categorize as to: response to author, nature of life, familial relationships, work, knowledge, human limitations, etc.
 2. Compare and contrast Igbo/Hausa/Yoruba proverbs with each other and then with those of the U.S. There are some African/Western proverbs which match. Can the students find them? For example:
Franklin: Creditors have better memories than debtors.
Igbo: A debt may get moldy, but it never decays.
 3. Students conjecture about what these societies might be like solely on the basis of the proverbs. This conjecture might take the form of an essay, which can be compared with observations made at the end of the entire unit.

AMERICAN PROVERBS

Emerson:

- Trust thyself: Every heart vibrates to that iron string.
- Our inner voices are the voices which we hear in solitude; they grow faint and inaudible when we enter into the world.
- Whoso would be a man must be a nonconformist.
- What I must do is all that concerns me, not what the people think.
- And, in fine, the ancient precept, "Know Thyself;" and the modern precept, "Study Nature," become at last one maxim.

Thoreau:

- Some circumstantial evidence is very strong, as when you find a trout in the milk.
- The youth gets together his materials to build a bridge to the moon, or, perchance, a palace or temple on the earth, and at length the middle aged man concludes to build a wood-shed with them.
- Nothing is so much to be feared as fear.
- How can we expect a harvest of thought when we have not had a seed-time of character?

Franklin:

- It is hard for an empty sack to stand upright.
- Many words won't fill a bushel.
- The used key is always bright.
- The sleeping fox catches no poultry.
- He that lives upon hope will die fasting.
- There are no gains without pains.
- He that hath a trade, hath an estate.
- At the working man's house, hunger looks in, but dares not enter.
- What maintains one vice would bring up two children.
- If you would have a faithful servant and one that you like, serve yourself.

- A ploughman on his legs is higher than a gentleman on his knees.
- If you will not hear reason, she will surely rap your knuckles.
- Creditors have better memories than debtors.

General Western:

- Half a loaf is better than none.
- If a first you don't succeed, try, try again.
- Murder will out.
- Where there's a will, there's a way.
- Do not set a wolf to look after the sheep.
- You can't make an omelette without breaking eggs.
- Life is not always a bed of roses.
- The acorn never falls far from the tree.
- Silence is golden.
- Neither a borrower nor a lender be.
- Haste makes waste.

NIGERIAN PROVERBS

Igbo Proverbs:

- The fear of causing offence can make a man swallow poison.
- If a man seeks a companion who acted entirely like himself, he would live in solitude.
- The mighty tree falls and the little birds scatter in the bush.
- The boy who persists in asking what happened to his father before he has enough strength to avenge him is asking for his father's fate.
- The woman who carries her head on a rigid neck as if she is carrying a pot of water will never live for long with any husband.
- A child who washes his hands clean deserves to eat with his elders.
- It is only proper that the left and right palms should wash each other so that both might be clean.
- One who is overcautious of his life is always killed by the fall of a dry leaf.
- A woman of beauty of the body, without the heart, is nothing but sweet poison.
- A hen cannot lay eggs and hatch them in the same day.
- Young people think that when they grow up they will reach the sky, and touch the stars; but after awhile they realize how far the sky is.
- Those who have people are wealthier than those with money.
- God holds the knife and God holds the yam.
- If you fail to take away a strong man's sword when he is on the ground, will you do it when he gets up?
- A debt may get moldy, but it never decays.
- When a coward sees a man he can beat, he becomes hungry for a fight.
- A woman does not carry her father's obi, house, to her husband.
- The fly that has no one to advise it follows the corpse into the grave.
- A man does not challenge his chi, personal destiny, to a wrestling match.
- A person who has not secured a place on the floor should not begin to look for a mat.

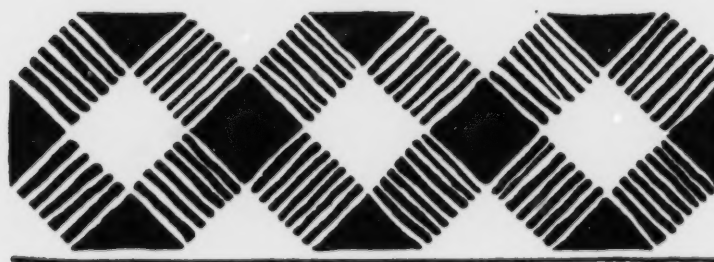
- The offspring of a hawk cannot fail to devour chicks.
- The world is like a mask dancing. If you want to see it well, you do not stand in one place.

Hausa Proverbs:

- Put out a fire while it is still small.
- When there is no porridge, you eat beans and go to sleep.
- Rather than get up and do a bad dance, stay put.
- What an adult sees from the ground, a boy cannot see even if he climbs a silk-cotton tree.
- The possessions of a friend belong to his friend. The friend of a chief is himself a chief.
- Sin is a dog which follows its owner.
- Allah made the silk-cotton tree beautiful, so let the fig tree cease being angry.
- The use of having fine clothes is to put them on.
- A shining face goes with a full stomach.
- You do not give a hyena meat to look after.
- Bending down to a dwarf does not prevent you from rising afterwards to your full height.
- Trading is not a question of mutual help.
- Rather begging than theft.
- You can win a woman with lies, but you cannot feed her with lies.
- If you see a camel eating thorns, it does not eat them for pleasure.
- The arrow of fate cannot be warded off by chain armor, the arrow will pierce it.
- However pleasant the sound of music, silence is better.
- At everything in the world, everyone has his superior.
- A woman in half a man.

Yoruba Proverbs:

- The insects which eat the cabbages are justified; there is a limit to the beauty of plants.
- We do not kill a dog because of its barking (moderation in punishment).
- The sky is immense, but grows no grass.
- The tiger after a hungry night is still stronger than a dog.
- Better to get wisdom than gold.
- He who marries beauty marries trouble.
- He who builds his house on rock is wise. He who builds it on sand should have a strong charm for good luck.
- Two hundred fools do not make a wise man.
- Can money prevent you from becoming blind?
- When a frog lies on its back, something has happened to it.



THE IGBO CULTURAL SETTING
TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS

- I. Distribute or read the Background section on The Igbo Cultural Setting.
- II. Before handing out the readings you might want to use the following activity to develop the concept that a society may be studied by examining what its people need to do to achieve status. Students may use this focus to examine the readings on indigenous African society. Then they may assess change by posing this question for the readings on colonial Nigeria and finally contemporary Nigeria (i.e. what must a man or a woman do to become successful or achieve honor in Lagos in the 1980's).
 - A. In the U.S., who is respected? Why?
 1. Each student develops a list of five respected people and the reason(s) why each is respected.
 2. Students pair up and create a consensus list of five people, again listing reason(s) why.
 3. Teacher writes on board two names and rationale from each pair of students.
 4. Analyze the resulting list. Commonalities? Differences?
 5. If student list contains few or no women, discuss reasons for this. Can students think of five honored women? Why are they? Is the respect women receive different from that which men receive?
 - B. Alternative question or additional question to pose:
What must a man do to become successful in the U.S.?
What must a woman do to become successful in the U.S.?
Are there similarities? Differences?
- III. Assign Readings

You may want to read one or two out loud. The students are learning about a society which places great value on oral communication. The African phraseology, dialogue, and relationships between people are best transmitted by hearing the words. The best readings for this are "The Mother's Early Life" and the first part of "The Funeral."
- IV. Hand out the Student Worksheet on The Igbo Cultural Setting. As a class or individually students can find examples to complete the worksheet which will help analyze the readings.
- V. Note: There is a Glossary of Terms at the end of the unit.

THE IGBO CULTURAL SETTING

Background

LAND AND CLIMATE: The Igbo region of southeast Nigeria is bounded by the Niger, Benue and Cross Rivers. The Igbo peoples have been in this area for centuries. The peoples to the north are predominately Hausa-Fulani, and Yoruba to the west, although there are literally hundreds of cultures and language groups surrounding the area. Among the Igbo themselves there are many dialects. People from one area do not always understand those from another.

The land they live in is varied. Forest covers much of the delta region, as well as much of the area west of the Niger. Soft rolling hills and grasslands are found in the north, with scattered forest, especially along the rivers. The weather is often humid and hot. There is a wet season from April until November, and in-between, a dry season. When rain comes, the southern part of the region experiences very heavy rainfall as strong storms sweep up from the south, off the Gulf, and deluge the land.

HISTORY: The Igbo people have an unwritten oral history that goes back for centuries. Stories and songs about the past have been transmitted from generation to generation by the older men and women of the villages. According to an Eze elder, the knowledge of the ancient years is "like gazing at the bottom of a deep gorge from the top of a high mountain. The objects are venerable, but the true nature of them is blurred by distance." Language also transmitted the Igbo spiritual heritage. Religion, indigenous education, the rules of behavior, and folklore were learned through the spoken word.

FAMILY: The family was patriarchal; when a woman married she went to live in her husband's village and her children belonged to his family. However, the ties between the woman and her village, and between her children and their mother's family remained strong. A woman could return home when she wanted. Divorce also was possible. This was partly true because marriage was more than a union between one man and one woman. It was a contract between two extended families and was arranged, tying two descent groups economically and socially. The contract was sealed through the payment of a bride price. This was not payment for a wife but rather payment which strengthened the alliance between the two families. The materials collected for the bride price were prestigious and traditionally were not monetary units.

Romantic, individual choice love was not felt to be the basis for a good match. Instead marriages were arranged between two families. The result was the creation of a large extended family which eventually consisted of married sons and their wives and children and perhaps the mother of the household head. An uncle, or unmarried younger brother of one of the wives might also be part of this "family;" slaves were also considered part of this lineage.

The family generally lived in compounds, clusters of small houses surrounded by a wall. The wooden gates to these compounds were highly decorated. Inside were the houses: one for the head of the family (*obi*) and others for his wives (*mkpuke*), married sons, and so forth. Any man who could afford it married more than one woman. Called polygamy, this practice grew out of a system where young men were killed regularly in skirmishes between villages. Polygamy ensured that every woman had a man and therefore children. It was important, too, in an economy where women do most of the domestic work and much of the farmwork; an added wife was needed to help with the work and increased the wealth of the compound. Each wife was given her own living quarters, fields to work and goods to trade. These were hers alone to use.

ECONOMY: Within the compound was found a small garden for vegetables, palm trees, one or two orange and banana trees and a shed for goats. Before each house was a clean open space which was swept each morning. One would find in several places shrines dedicated to the spirits and the ancestors. The children were trained early in life to do much of the work around the compound.

The Igbos were farmers. The chief crop was the yam (see glossary), a tuber planted when the rains first began. Yams demanded constant attention once planted and ceremonies surrounded their planting and harvesting. Corn, beans, okra, gourds, and many other kinds of vegetables were grown. The palm tree was highly useful. From it came oil, kernels, timber, fronds, tender shoots which serve as candles when dried and soaked in oil, and palm wine. Fish also was important in the Igbo diet. The network of waterways throughout the region allowed for fishing and provided an avenue for trade.

The Igbo market was similar to the *forum romanum*. Each market was dedicated to a spirit. It was the place for trade, village meetings, dances, games, and above all, gossip. Villages would compete with each other to try to become the most successful. The Igbo week had four days; Eke, Oye (Orie), Afo (Afor) and Nkwo. These are the four regular market days, although some markets were held only once in eight days.

MEN'S WORLD - WOMEN'S WORLD: There was a strict division of work between men and women. The women did the domestic chores, with food preparation being the most time consuming. They also planted coco yams, corn, rice and traded the surplus of their crops. Most importantly they were the bearers of the children and achieved great status if they had many children, particularly if most of these children were males. Men cleared the fields and planted the prestigious large yams. They were the warriors, cloth makers, artisans, builders and musicians. They also made the major political decisions of the community, although women had a voice through their all-female societies. This segregation of the sexes created separate women's and men's worlds. Men and women sought their own gender for leisure activities, work, good conversation, and for certain religious ceremonies.

RELIGION AND RITUALS: Ceremonies were an important part of the culture. By participating in them children were taught the values of the group while the community reaffirmed its cultural identity. At puberty an important ceremony initiated each child into his or her age-group. This same-age group remained friends throughout life and acted as a source of support in times of trouble. The group also helped maintain law and order, gave help for public community

works, and participated in several special religious ceremonies. For example, each age group offered performances at the death of a member.

There were a number of secret societies, some for females, others for males, which functioned for economic and religious reasons. They were a way people expressed themselves about and were used to organize the many ceremonies and rites needed throughout the year to keep life in the village running smoothly. Leading roles were taken by people who were wealthy, eloquent and vocal (who "got mouth").

The Igbo were polytheistic, worshipping numerous dieties. There was a major God, who was all good. He was not directly worshipped, nor was there a shrine nor priests dedicated to God. However, there were many minor gods and goddesses, each village had some the others lacked. These were appealed to according to what they could do for the individual and some had priests or priestesses who served them. Ancestral spirits were also venerated. It was thought that a close link existed between the living and the dead. The spirits of the departed were thought to return during the mask-wearing ceremonies, or by being reborn when a new baby arrived. The Igbo believed that when a person died the spirit of the person wandered until it was received into the company of its ancestors. Only a proper funeral rite conducted by those still alive could ensure this; for this reason the funeral ceremony is an extremely important Igbo ritual.

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS: For the Igbo, as for many African peoples, to exist was to be a member of the group: "the proud man will go alone." Family and social structures reinforced this attitude. One went through life not as an individual but as a member of society. Birth was an addition to the group; death was a loss to the group.

If one became ill, the group would plow and maintain the crop until the person improved. Building homes, celebrating marriages, going to war, participating on market day -- those were all expected of the group. Individual distinctions could be sought, however, and were acknowledged through the granting of titles. This was primarily a male competitive activity. Titles had to be earned, through good deeds, wealth and special skills. A title was needed in order to have a voice in village decisions.

Igbo political life was rather democratic. Unlike the mighty Obas of the Yoruba or the powerful Emirs of the Fulani, the Igbo political organization was the village soup. There were chief priests, elders and titled men to give advice and guidance. Their voices were carefully listened to: "What an old man sees while sitting down, a child will not even see when he stands up." But the ideal was that no one should acquire too much wealth or control over the lives of others.

Note: Although written in the past tense, many of the social and economic conditions and relations described exist today, especially in rural villages.

WORKSHEET FOR READINGS ON TRADITIONAL
VILLAGE LIFE

As you read the selections find examples which describe village life in the following areas:

1. Economic Life:
(Working, trading, food/eating, etc.)
2. Religious beliefs:
3. Cultural Life:
(Music, stories, dances, greetings, etc.)
4. Political Life:
(How decisions made, how village run, relations between villages, etc.)

5. Expectations of men:
(Work, leisure time, treatment as a child, areas where men have power, areas where men have restrictions, etc.)

6. Expectations of women:
(Work, leisure time, treatment as children, areas where women have power, areas where women have restrictions, etc.)

7. Reinforcing Communal ties:
(statements, rituals, communal acts which encourage individual to think and act collectively)

ONE OF THE GREATEST MEN OF HIS TIME
Chinua Achebe, Things Fall Apart, Chapter One

Background

The action of "One of the Greatest Men of His Time," like that of most of the other readings, takes place in a small village where nearly everyone farms. Although this story is set in the past, much remains the same in Nigerian villages today. Vocabulary words found in the glossary include: harmattan, palm oil/wine, yam, kola, ekwe, ogene, udu and egwugwu. Igbo names may look hard to pronounce but are very simple. Each name is spelled phonetically, which means all letters are pronounced. Each syllable ends with a vowel or vowel sounds, e.g. O kon kwo, A ma lin ze, u mu o fi a.

This reading clearly shows important symbols of manhood: wealth, strength, title taking, warrior ability, ability to lead, bravery. General Igbo values are also very important. Notice besides skill in wrestling: hard work, paying off debts, music, feasting, giving, respect for ancestors, farming, marriage and conversation/speaking.

Okonkwo was well known throughout the nine villages and even beyond. His fame rested on solid personal achievements. As a young man of eighteen he had brought honor to his village by throwing Amalinze the Cat. Amalinze was the great wrestler who for seven years was unbeaten, from Umuofia to Mbaino. He was called the Cat because his back would never touch the earth. It was this man that Okonkwo threw in a fight which the old men agreed was one of the fiercest since the founder of their town engaged a spirit of the wild for seven days and seven nights.

The drums beat and the flutes sang and the spectators held their breath. Amalinze was a wily craftsman, but Okonkwo was as slippery as a fish in water. Every nerve and every muscle stood out on their arms, on their backs and their thighs, and one almost heard them stretching to breaking point. In the end Okonkwo threw the Cat.

That was many years ago, twenty years or more, and during this time

Okonkwo's fame had grown like a bush-fire in the harmattan. He was tall and huge, and his bushy eyebrows and wide nose gave him a very severe look. He breathed heavily, and it was said that, when he slept, his wives and children in their houses could hear him breathe. When he walked, his heels hardly touched the ground and he seemed to walk on springs, as if he was going to pounce on somebody. And he did pounce on people quite often. He had a slight stammer and whenever he was angry and could not get his words out quickly enough, he would use his fists. He had no patience with unsuccessful men. He had had no patience with his father.

Unoka, for that was his father's name, had died ten years ago. In his day he was lazy and improvident and was quite incapable of thinking about tomorrow. If any money came his way, and it seldom did, he immediately bought gourds of palm-wine, called round his neighbors and made merry. He always said that whenever he saw a dead man's

mouth he saw the folly of not eating what one had in one's lifetime. Unoka was, of course, a debtor, and he owed every neighbor some money, from a few cowries to quite substantial amounts.

He was tall but very thin and had a slight stoop. He wore a haggard and mournful look except when he was drinking or playing on his flute. He was very good on his flute, and his happiest moments were the two or three moons after the harvest when the village musicians brought down their instruments, hung above the fireplace. Unoka would play with them, his face beaming with blessedness and peace. Sometimes another village would ask Unoka's band and their dancing egwugwu to come and stay with them and teach them their tunes. They would go to such hosts for as long as three or four markets, making music and feasting. Unoka loved the good fare and the good fellowship, and he loved this season of the year, when the rains had stopped and the sun rose every morning with dazzling beauty. And it was not too hot either, because the cold and dry harmattan wind was blowing down from the north. Some years the harmattan was very severe and a dense haze hung on the atmosphere. Old men and children would then sit round log fires, warming their bodies. Unoka loved it all, and he loved the first kites that returned with the dry season, and the children who sang songs of welcome to them. He would remember his own childhood, how he had often wandered around looking for a kite sailing leisurely against the blue sky. As soon as he found one he would sing with his whole being, welcoming it back from its long, long journey, and asking it if it had brought home any lengths of cloth.

That was years ago, when he was young. Unoka, the grown-up, was a failure. He was poor and his wife and children had barely enough to eat. People laughed at him because he was a loafer, and they swore never to lend him any more money because he never paid back. But Unoka was such a man that he always succeeded in borrowing more, and piling up his debts.

One day a neighbor called Okoye came in to see him. He was reclining on a mud bed in his hut playing on the flute. He immediately rose and shook hands with Okoye, who then unrolled the goatskin which he carried under his arm, and sat down. Unoka went into an inner room and soon returned with a small wooden disc containing a kola nut, some alligator pepper and a lump of white chalk.

"I have kola," he announced when he sat down, and passed the disc over to his guest.

"Thank you. He who brings kola brings life. But I think you ought to break it," replied Okoye, passing back the disc.

"No, it is for you, I think," and they argued like this for a few moments before Unoka accepted the honor of breaking the kola. Okoye, meanwhile, took the lump of chalk, drew some lines on the floor, and then painted his big toe.

As he broke the kola, Unoka prayed to their ancestors for life and health, and for protection against their enemies. When they had eaten they talked about many things: about the heavy rains which were drowning the yams, about the next ancestral feast and about the impending war with the village of Mbaino. Unoka was never happy when

it came to wars. He was in fact a coward and could not bear the sight of blood. And so he changed the subject and talked about music, and his face beamed. He could hear in his mind's ear the bloodstirring and intricate rhythms of the ekwe and the udu and the ogene, and he could hear his own flute weaving in and out of them, decorating them with a colorful and plaintive tune. The total effect was gay and brisk, but if one picked out the flute as it went up and down and then broke up into short snatches, one saw that there was sorrow and grief there.

Okoye was also a musician. He played on the ogene. But he was not a failure like Unoka. He had a large barn full of yams and he had three wives. And now he was going to take the Idemili title, the third highest in the land. It was a very expensive ceremony and he was gathering all his resources together. That was in fact the reason why he had come to see Unoka. He cleared his throat and began:

"Thank you for the kola. You may have heard of the title I intend to take shortly."

Having spoken plainly so far, Okoye said the next half a dozen sentences in proverbs. Among the Ibo the art of conversation is regarded very highly, and proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten. Okoye was a great talker and he spoke for a long time, skirting round the subject and then hitting it finally. In short, he was asking Unoka to return the two hundred cowries he had borrowed from him more than two years before. As soon as Unoka understood what his friend was driving at, he burst out laughing. He laughed loud and long and his voice rang out clear as the ogene, and tears stood in his eyes. His visitor was

amazed, and sat speechless. At the end, Unoka was able to give an answer between fresh outbursts of mirth.

"Look at that wall," he said, pointing at the far wall of his hut, which was rubbed with red earth so that it shone. "Look at those lines of chalk," and Okoye saw groups of short perpendicular lines drawn in chalk. There were five groups, and the smallest group had ten lines. Unoka had a sense of the dramatic and so he allowed a pause, in which he took a pinch of snuff and sneezed noisily, and then he continued: "Each group there represents a debt to someone, and each stroke is one hundred cowries. You see, I owe that man a thousand cowries. But he has not come to wake me up in the morning for it. I shall pay you, but not today. Our elders say that the sun will shine on those who stand before it shines on those who kneel under them. I shall pay my big debts first." And he took another pinch of snuff, as if that was paying the big debts first. Okoye rolled his goatskin and departed.

When Unoka died he had taken no title at all and he was heavily in debt. Any wonder then that his son Okonkwo was ashamed of him? Fortunately, among these people a man was judged according to his worth and not according to the worth of his father. Okonkwo was clearly cut out for great things. He was still young but he had won fame as the greatest wrestler in the nine villages. He was a wealthy farmer and had two barns full of yams, and had just married his third wife. To crown it all he had taken two titles and had shown incredible prowess in two inter-tribal wars. And so although Okonkwo was still young, he was already one of the greatest men of his time. Age was respected among his people, but

achievement was revered. As the elders said, if a child washed his hands he could eat with kings. Okonkwo had clearly washed his hands and so he ate with kings and elders. And that was how he came

to look after the doomed lad who was sacrificed to the village of Umuofia by their neighbors to avoid war and bloodshed. The ill-fated lad was called Ikemefuna.

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Questions:

1. Discuss Unoka's qualities. Discuss Okonkwo's qualities. How are they similar/different?
2. How does the following proverb from the story fit Okonkwo? "If a child washes his hands he may eat with kings."
3. What is the purpose of taking kola, and the drawing of lines on the floor and the coloring of the big toe with chalk? (You may decide to leave this hypothesis as conjecture, or provide "the answer." What are some U.S. customs regarding guests?)
4. Find examples of phrases Achebe uses to bring his reader into the world of the Igbo forest and village.
5. Explain the meaning of "proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten."
6. Give examples from the reading of the values listed in the background at the beginning.

THE KILLING OF IKEMEFUNA

Chinua Achebe, Things Fall Apart, Chapter Seven

Background

Ikemefuna was taken as a war payment from one village for an injustice done to the village of Umuofia. It was decided by the elders that he would be housed with Okonkwo and his family until they decided what to do with him. (This practice should be put under "political life" on the worksheet -- elders making decisions.) There are good examples of the work men and women do in this reading. Vocabulary words found in the glossary include: obi, foo-foo, coco yam, locust, ozo, and Chukwu.

For three years Ikemefuna lived in Okonkwo's household and the elders of Umuofia seemed to have forgotten about him. He grew rapidly like a yam tendril in the rainy season, and was full of the sap of life. He had become wholly absorbed into his new family. He was like an elder brother to Nwoye, and from the very first seemed to have kindled a new fire in the younger boy. He made him feel grown-up; and they no longer spent the evenings in mother's hut while she cooked, but now sat with Okonkwo in his obi, or watched him as he tapped his palm tree for the evening wine. Nothing pleased Nwoye now more than to be sent for by his mother or another of his father's wives to do one of those difficult and masculine tasks in the home, like splitting wood, or pounding food. On receiving such a message through a younger brother or sister, Nwoye would feign annoyance and grumble aloud about women and their troubles.

Okonkwo was inwardly pleased at his son's development, and he knew it was due to Ikemefuna. He wanted Nwoye to grow into a tough young man capable of ruling his father's household when he was dead and gone to join the ancestors. He wanted him to be a prosperous man, having enough in his barn to feed the

ancestors with regular sacrifices. And so he was always happy when he heard him grumbling about women. That showed that in time he would be able to control his women-folk. No matter how prosperous a man was, if he was unable to rule his women and his children (and especially his women) he was not really a man. He was like the man in the song who had ten and one wives and not enough soup for his foo-foo.

So Okonkwo encouraged the boys to sit with him in his obi, and he told them stories of the land - masculine stories of violence and bloodshed. Nwoye knew that it was right to be masculine and to be violent, but somehow he still preferred the stories that his mother used to tell, and which she no doubt still told to her younger children - stories of the tortoise and his wily ways, and of the bird eneke-nti-oba who challenged the whole world to a wrestling contest and was finally thrown by the cat. He remembered the story she often told of the quarrel between Earth and Sky long ago, and how Sky withheld the rain for seven years, until crops withered and the dead could not be buried because the hoes broke on the stony Earth. At last Vulture was sent to plead with Sky, and to soften his heart with a song of the suffering of the sons of men. Whenever Nwoye's mother

sang this song he felt carried away to the distant scene in the sky where Vulture, Earth's emissary, sang for mercy. At last Sky was moved to pity, and he gave to Vulture rain wrapped in leaves of coco-yam. But as he flew home his long talon pierced the leaves and the rain fell as it had never fallen before. And so heavily did it rain on Vulture that he did not return to deliver his message but flew to a distant land, from where he had espied a fire. And when he got there he found it was a man making a sacrifice. He warmed himself in the fire and ate the entrails.

That was the kind of story that Nwoye loved. But he now knew that they were for foolish women and children, and he knew that his father wanted him to be a man. And so he feigned that he no longer cared for women's stories. And when he did this he saw that his father was pleased, and no longer rebuked him or beat him. So Nwoye and Ikemefuna would listen to Okonkwo's stories about tribal wars, or how, years ago, he had stalked his victim, overpowered him and obtained his first human head. And as he told them of the past they sat in darkness or the dim glow of logs, waiting for the women to finish their cooking. When they finished, each brought her bowl of foo-foo and bowl of soup to her husband. An oil lamp was lit and Okonkwo tasted from each bowl, and then passed two shares to Nwoye and Ikemefuna.

In this way the moons and the seasons passed. And then the locusts came. It had not happened for many a long year. The elders said locusts came once in a generation, reappeared every year for seven years and then disappeared for another lifetime. They went back to their caves in a distant land,

where they were guarded by a race of stunted men. And then after another lifetime these men opened the caves again and the locusts came to Umuofia.

They came in the cold harmattan season after the harvests have been gathered, and ate up all the wild grass in the fields.

Okonkwo and the two boys were working on the red outer walls of the compound. This was one of the lighter tasks of the after-harvest season. A new cover of thick palm branches and palm leaves was set on the walls to protect them from the next rainy season. Okonkwo worked on the outside of the wall and the boys worked from within. There were little holes from one side to the other in the upper levels of the wall, and through these Okonkwo passed the rope, or tie-tie, to the boys and they passed it round the wooden stays and then back to him; and in this way the cover was strengthened on the wall.

The women had gone to the bush to collect firewood, and the little children to visit their playmates in the neighboring compounds. The harmattan was in the air and seemed to distill a hazy feeling of sleep on the world. Okonkwo and the boys worked in complete silence, which was only broken when a new palm frond was lifted on to the wall or when a busy hen moved dry leaves about in her ceaseless search for food.

And then quite suddenly a shadow fell on the world, and the sun seemed hidden behind a thick cloud. Okonkwo looked up from his work and wondered if it was going to rain at such an unlikely time of the year. But almost immediately a shout of joy broke out in all directions, and Umuofia, which had dozed in the noon-day haze, broke into life and activity.

"Locusts are descending," was joyfully chanted everywhere, and men, women and children left their work or their play and ran into the open to see the unfamiliar sight. The locusts had not come for many, many years, and only the old people had seen them before.

At first, a fairly small swarm came. They were the harbingers sent to survey the land. And then appeared on the horizon a slowly-moving mass like a boundless sheet of black cloud drifting towards Umuofia. Soon it covered half the sky and the solid mass was now broken by tiny eyes of light like shining star dust. It was a tremendous sight, full of power and beauty.

Everyone was now about, talking excitedly and praying that the locusts should camp in Umuofia for the night. For although locusts had not visited Umuofia for many years, everybody knew by instinct that they were very good to eat. And at last the locusts did attend. They settled on every tree and on every blade of grass; they settled on the roofs and covered the bare ground. Mighty tree branches broke away under them, and the whole country became the brown-color of the vast, hungry swarm.

Many people went out with baskets trying to catch them, but the elders counseled patience till night-fall. And they were right. The locusts settled in the bushes for the night and their wings became wet with dew. Then all Umuofia turned out in spite of the cold harmattan, and everyone filled his bags and pots with locusts. The next morning they were roasted in clay pots and then spread in the sun until they became dry and brittle. And for many days this rare food was eaten with solid palm-oil.

Okonkwo sat in his obi crunching happily with Ikemefuna and Nwoye, and drinking palm-wine copiously, when Ogbuefi Ezeudu came in. Ezeudu was the oldest man in this quarter of Umuofia. He had been a great and fearless warrior in his time, and was now accorded great respect in all the clan. He refused to join in the meal, and asked Okonkwo to have a word with him outside. And so they walked out together, the old man supporting himself with his stick. When they were out of earshot, he said to Okonkwo:

"That boy calls you father. Do not bear a hand in his death." Okonkwo was surprised, and was about to say something when the old man continued:

"Yes, Umuofia has decided to kill him. The Oracle of the Hills and the Caves has pronounced it. They will take him outside Umuofia as is the custom, and kill him there. But I want you to have nothing to do with it. He calls you his father."

The next day a group of elders from all the nine villages of Umuofia came to Okonkwo's house early in the morning, and before they began to speak in low tones Nwoye and Ikemefuna were sent out. They did not stay very long, but when they went away Okonkwo sat still for a very long time supporting his chin in his palms. Later in the day he called Ikemefuna and told him that he was to be taken home the next day. Nwoye overheard it and burst into tears, whereupon his father beat him heavily. As for Ikemefuna, he was at a loss. His own home had gradually become very faint and distant. He still missed his mother and his sister and would be very glad to see them. He remembered once when men had talked in low tones with his father; and it seemed now as if it was happening all over again.

Later, Nwoye went to his mother's hut and told her that Ikemefuna was going home. She immediately dropped her pestle with which she was grinding pepper, folded her arms across her breast and sighed, "Poor child."

The next day, the men returned with a pot of wine. They were all fully dressed as if they were going to a big clan meeting or to pay a visit to a neighboring village. They passed their cloths under the right arm-pit, and hung their goatskin bags and sheathed machetes over their left shoulders. Okonkwo got ready quickly and the party set out with Ikemefuna carrying the pot of wine. A deathly silence descended on Okonkwo's compound. Even the very little children seemed to know. Throughout the day Nwoye sat in his mother's hut and tears stood in his eyes.

At the beginning of their journey the men of Umuofia talked and laughed about the locusts, about their women, and about some effeminate men who had refused to come with them. But as they drew near to the outskirts of Umuofia silence fell upon them too.

The sun rose slowly to the center of the sky, and the dry, sandy footway began to throw up the heat that lay buried in it. Some birds chirruped in the forests around. The men trod dry leaves on the sand. All else was silent. Then from the distance came the faint beating of the ekwe. It rose and faded with the wind - a peaceful dance from a distant clan.

"It is an ozo dance," the men said among themselves. But no one was sure where it was coming from. Some said Ezimili, others Abame or Aninta. They argued for a short while and fell into silence again, and the elusive dance rose and fell

with the wind. Somewhere a man was taking one of the titles of his clan, with music and dancing and a great feast.

The footway had now become a narrow line in the heart of the forest. The short trees and sparse undergrowth which surrounded the men's village began to give way to giant trees and climbers which perhaps had stood from the beginning of things, untouched by the ax and the bush-fire. The sun breaking through their leaves and branches threw a pattern of light and shade on the sandy footway.

Ikemefuna heard a whisper close behind him and turned round sharply. The man who had whispered now called out aloud, urging the others to hurry up.

"We still have a long way to go," he said. Then he and another man went before Ikemefuna and set a faster pace.

Thus the men of Umuofia pursued their way, armed with sheathed machetes, and Ikemefuna, carrying a pot of palm-wine on his head, walked in their midst. Although he had felt uneasy at first, he was not afraid now. Okonkwo walked behind him. He could hardly imagine that Okonkwo was not his real father. He had never been fond of his real father, and at the end of three years he had become very distant indeed. But his mother and his three-year-old sister... of course she would not be three now, but six. Would he recognize her now? She must have grown quite big. How his mother would weep for joy, and thank Okonkwo for having looked after him so well and for bringing him back. She would want to hear everything that had happened to him in all these years. Could he remember them all? He would tell her about Nwoye and his

mother, and about the locusts... Then quite suddenly a thought came upon him. His mother might be dead. He tried in vain to force the thought out of his mind. Then he tried to settle the matter the way he used to settle such matters when he was a little boy. He still remembered the song:

Eze elina, elina!
Sala
Eze ilikwa ya
Ikwaba akwa oligholi
Ebe Danda nechi eze
Ebe Uzuzu nete egwu
Sala

He sang it in his mind, and walked to its beat. If the song ended on his right foot, his mother was alive. If it ended on his left, she was dead. No, not dead, but ill. It ended on the right. She was alive and well. He sang the song again, and it ended on the left. But the second time did not count. The first voice gets to Chukwu, or God's house. That was a favorite saying of children. Ikemefuna felt like a child once more. It must be the thought of going home to his mother.

One of the men behind him cleared his throat. Ikemefuna looked back, and the man growled at him to go on and not stand looking back. The way he said it sent cold fear down Ikemefuna's back. His hands trembled vaguely on the black pot he carried. Why had Okonkwo withdrawn to the rear? Ikemefuna felt his legs melting under him. And he was afraid to look back.

As the man who had cleared his throat drew up and raised his machete, Okonkwo looked away. He heard the blow. The pot fell and broke in the sand. He heard

Ikemefuna cry, "My father, they have killed me!" as he ran towards him. Dazed with fear, Okonkwo drew his machete and cut him down. He was afraid of being thought weak.

As soon as his father walked in, that night, Nwoye knew that Ikemefuna had been killed, and something seemed to give way inside him, like the snapping of a tightened bow. He did not cry. He just hung limp. He had had the same kind of feeling not long ago, during the last harvest season. Every child loved the harvest season. Those who were big enough to carry even a few yams in a tiny basket went with grown-ups to the farm. And if they could not help in digging up the yams, they could gather firewood together for roasting the ones that would be eaten there on the farm. This roasted yam soaked in red-palm oil and eaten in the open farm was sweeter than any meal at home. It was after such a day at the farm during the last harvest that Nwoye had felt for the first time a snapping inside him like the one he now felt. They were returning home with baskets of yams from a distant farm across the stream when they heard the voice of an infant crying in the thick forest. A sudden hush had fallen on the women, who had been talking, and they had quickened their steps. Nwoye had heard that twins were put in earthenware pots and thrown away in the forest, but he had never yet come across them. A vague chill had descended on him and his head had seemed to swell, like a solitary walker at night who passes an evil spirit on the way. Then something had given way inside him. It descended on him again, this feeling, when his father walked in, that night after killing Ikemefuna.

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Questions:

1. How did Okonkwo feel about his part in the killing of Ikemefuna? Did he have to do it? How did his son react? Will this affect his relationship with his father? What differences are there between them now?
2. Were there stories like the myth about the rain that you were told as a child? What about village life would make this myth particularly appealing to Igbo children?
3. Did the villagers reaction to the plague of locusts surprise you? What stories from other parts of the world have you heard about locust invasions?



THE FUNERAL

Chinua Achebe, Things Fall Apart, Chapter Thirteen

Background

A funeral is a very important ceremony. If the funeral is not done properly, one's transition to the world of the ancestors will not be smooth and the unpurified soul may come back to haunt the group. The year after death rituals are also important. Today in Nigeria honoring the dead often includes placing a picture of the departed and announcements of the devotion of the relatives in the newspaper.

Okonkwo's mistake in taking a life during this important event is compounded by an earlier mistake when he beat one of his wives on a day of peace. Both events were seen as acts offensive to the goddess Ani. Although this is a very male oriented society, the female element, through the power of this goddess plus the fact that he flees to his mother's people for refuge, are two ways women receive status.

Go-di-di-go-go-di-go. Di-go-go-di-go. It was the ekwe talking to the clan. One of the things every man learned was the language of the hollowed out wooden instrument. Diim! Diim! Diim! boomed the cannon at intervals.

The first cock had not crowed, and Umuofia was still swallowed up in sleep and silence when the ekwe began to talk, and the cannon shattered the silence. Men stirred on their bamboo beds and listened anxiously. Somebody was dead. The cannon seemed to rend the sky. Di-go-go-di-go-di-di-go-go floated in the message-laden night air. The faint and distant wailing of women settled like a sediment of sorrow on the earth. Now and again a full-chested lamentation rose above the wailing whenever a man came into the place of death. He raised his voice once or twice in manly sorrow and then sat down with the other men listening to the endless wailing of the women and the esoteric language of the ekwe. Now and again the cannon boomed. The wailing of the women would not be heard beyond the village, but the ekwe carried the news to all the

nine villages and even beyond. It began by naming the clan: Umuofia obodo dike, "the land of the brave." Umuofia obodo dike! Umuofia obodo dike! It said this over and over again, and as it dwelt on it, anxiety mounted in every heart that heaved on a bamboo bed that night. Then it went nearer and named the village: "Iguedo of the yellow grinding-stone!" It was Okonkwo's village. Again and again Iguedo was called and men waited breathlessly in all nine villages. At last the man was named and people sighed "E-u-u, Ezeudu is dead." A cold shiver ran down Okonkwo's back as he remembered the last time the old man visited him. "That boy calls you father," he had said. "Bear no hand in his death."

Ezeudu was a great man, and so all the clan was at his funeral. The ancient drums of death beat, guns and cannon were fired, and men dashed about in frenzy, cutting down every tree or animal they saw, jumping over walls, and dancing on the roof. It was a warrior's funeral, and from morning till night warriors came and went in their age

groups. They all wore smoked raffia skirts and their bodies were painted with chalk and charcoal. Now and again an ancestral spirit or egwugwu appeared from the underworld, speaking in a tremulous, unearthly voice and completely covered in raffia. Some of them were very violent, and there had been a mad rush for shelter earlier in the day when one appeared with a sharp machete and was only prevented from doing serious harm by two men who restrained him with the help of a strong rope tied round his waist. Sometimes he turned round and chased those men, and they ran for their lives. But they always returned to the long rope he trailed behind. He sang, in a terrifying voice, that Ekwensu, or Evil Spirit, had entered his eye.

But the most dreaded of all was yet to come. He was always alone and was shaped like a coffin. A sickly odor hung in the air wherever he went, and flies went with him. Even the greatest medicine men took shelter when he was near. Many years ago another egwugwu had dared to stand his ground before him and had been transfixed to the spot for two days. This one had only one hand and it carried a basket full of water.

But some of the egwugwu were quite harmless. One of them was so old and infirm that he leaned heavily on a stick. He walked unsteadily to the place where the corpse was laid, gazed at it a while and went away again - to the underworld.

The land of the living was not far removed from the domain of the ancestors. There was coming and going between them, especially at festivals and also when an old man died, because an old man was very close to the ancestors. A man's life from birth to death was a series of transition rites which

brought him nearer and nearer to his ancestors.

Ezeudu had been the oldest man in his village, and at his death there were only three men in the whole clan who were older, and four or five other in his own age group. Whenever one of these ancient men appeared in the crowd to dance unsteadily the funeral steps of the tribe, younger men gave way and the tumult subsided.

It was a great funeral, such as befitted a noble warrior. As the evening drew near, the shouting and the firing of guns, the beating of drums and the brandishing and clanging of machetes increased.

Ezeudu had taken three titles in his life. It was a rare achievement. There were only four titles in the clan, and only one or two men in any generation every achieved the fourth and highest. When they did, they became the lords of the land. Because he had taken titles, Ezeudu was to be buried after dark with only a glowing brand to light the sacred ceremony.

But before this quiet final rite, the tumult increased tenfold. Drums beat violently and men leaped up and down in frenzy. Guns were fired on all sides and sparks flew out as machetes clanged together in warriors' salutes. The air was full of dust and the smell of gunpowder. It was then that the one-handed spirit came, carrying a basket full of water. People made way for him on all sides and the noise subsided. Even the smell of gunpowder was swallowed in the sickly smell that now filled the air. He danced a few steps to the funeral drums and then went to see the corpse.

"Ezeudu!" he called in his guttural voice. "If you had been poor in your last life I would have asked

you to be rich when you come again. But you were rich. If you had been a coward, I would have asked you to bring courage. But you were a fearless warrior. If you had died young, I would have asked you to get life. But you lived long. So I shall ask you to come again the way you came before. If your death was the death of nature, go in peace. But if a man caused it, do not allow him a moment's rest." He danced a few more steps and went away.

The drums and the dancing began again and reached fever-heat. Darkness was around the corner, and the burial was near. Guns fired the last salute and the cannon rent the sky. And then from the center of the delirious fury came a cry of agony and shouts of horror. It was as if a spell had been cast. All was silent. In the center of the crowd a boy lay in a pool of blood. It was the dead man's sixteen-year-old son, who with his brothers and half-brothers had been dancing the traditional farewell to their father. Okonkwo's gun had exploded and a piece of iron had pierced the boy's heart.

The confusion that followed was without parallel in the tradition of Umuofia. Violent deaths were frequent, but nothing like this had ever happened.

The only course open to Okonkwo was to flee from the clan. It was a crime against the earth goddess to kill a clansman, and a man who committed it must flee from the land. The crime was of two kinds, male and female. Okonkwo had committed the female, because it had been inadvertent. He could return to the clan after seven years.

That night he collected his most

valuable belongings into headloads. His wives wept bitterly and their children wept with them without knowing why. Obierika and half a dozen other friends came to help and to console him. They each made nine or ten trips carrying Okonkwo's yams to store in Obierika's barn. And before the cock crowed Okonkwo and his family were fleeing to his motherland. It was a little village called Mbanta, just beyond the borders of Mbaino.

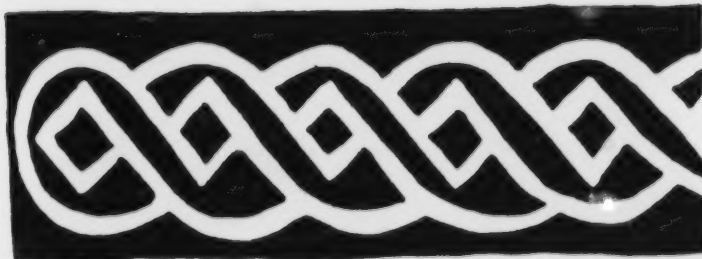
As soon as the day broke, a large crowd of men from Ezeudu's quarter stormed Okonkwo's compound, dressed in garbs of war. They set fire to his houses, demolished his red walls, killed his animals and destroyed his barn. It was the justice of the earth goddess, and they were merely her messengers. They had no hatred in their hearts against Okonkwo. His greatest friend, Obierika, was among them. They were merely cleansing the land which Okonkwo had polluted with the blood of a clansman.

Obierika was a man who thought about things. When the will of the goddess had been done, he sat down in his obi and mourned his friend's calamity. Why should a man suffer so grievously for an offense he had committed inadvertently? But although he thought for a long time he found no answer. He was merely led into greater complexities. He remembered his wife's twin children, whom he had thrown away. What crime had they committed? The Earth had decreed that they were an offense on the land and must be destroyed. And if the clan did not exact punishment for an offense against the great goddess, her wrath was loosed on all the land and not just on the offender. As the elders said, if one finger brought oil it soiled the others.

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Questions:

1. Have you ever inadvertantly harmed someone? What response did you get from your family? Community? Friends? Police/authorities?
2. Can you discuss funeral rites in the U.S.? Are they as public an event? Are there cultural differences as to how they are held within the U.S.? What values can be seen from these differences?
3. How do you find out that Ezeudu was an important man? What were his symbols of success?
4. Why was Okonkwo banished? What costs does the village pay for this banishment?
5. Go through the selection to find the language Achebe uses to evoke the sounds of the village. How might the sounds of instruments and voices be important in African society?





ONITSHA MARKET
Buchi Emecheta, The Slave Girl, Chapter Four

Background

This description of the Onitsha market actually dates from the colonial period, but its flavor and essential ingredients were found in pre-colonial markets. The African market was similar in many ways to the Medieval European fairs. People from all over arrived to exhibit the wares of their regions. They generally stayed and sold together. Starting in about the 16th century, Igbo markets became well-known for their size and energy. The Onitsha market is on the banks of the Niger River. The Eke market is one section of it. It is still an important market.

Ojebeta's safety charms and tatoos were expensive items and proof that her parents loved her. She had been considered an ogbanje, a child who dies and keeps on coming back to be born again. The talismans were given her in an attempt to stop this cycle. It also is a way to establish identification with her people.

The Onitsha market called Otu, one of West Africa's big meeting places, was situated on the bank of the River Niger and served not only the people of Onitsha but those from the surrounding Ibo towns and villages as well. They regarded this place as the centre of their world. A market day was an occasion to dress up and meet with friends, as well as to buy and sell. The market was where people who wanted to display their dances went, be it an age-group or a family showing the end of their mourning for a departed relative. And there were many superstitions attached to the market place. For example, if a person was insane then so long as the madness was not shown in the market there was hope of a cure. The big markets were places where the visible living met and among them moved the dead and the invisible.

So Otu Onitsha was like a nerve-center sending messages to all the surrounding areas. The latest agbada cloth was to be bought at Onitsha. The newest fashion was sure to be seen worn by somebody at Onitsha. The most recent gossip could be heard at Onitsha.

Okolie and his charge Ojebeta did not regret leaving the flat-bottomed canoe that had ferried them across the river from Asaba. At first Ojebeta had liked the enthusiastic rowing of the canoe men, so much so that she had allowed her fingers to run through the water as they sped. But after a while, when she had begun to feel dizzy, and a market woman carrying a pot of red palm oil to sell had warned her to take care lest she was thrown into the river, Ojebeta had become scared. Her fear was not lessened

by the strange loud songs of the canoe men in tune with their stylish rowing. When they stopped singing, their talking was so voluble that their voices seemed to be drawing the gentle waves of the blue waters against the brown sides of the wooden boat. As they rowed near the waterside, the clamour coming from Otu Onitsha drowned all thoughts.

The Eke market was the biggest market Ojebeta had previously ever seen before, but this one looked to her like a whole city. It was a complete market landscape that seemed to stretch for miles. People swarmed and buzzed like insects. Most were dressed up fashionably, but some, like the canoe men and the people selling fresh fish, wore only very meagre cloths wrapped kite-like round their loins. Apart from the Ibo traders, there were Yoruba stalls where you could buy different kinds of root medicine and the black dyed cloth called iyaji (in fact it was more a navy blue but to the Ibos, who liked things colourful, bright and flowery, anything darkish and plain was black). Even the Northerners - the Hausas, and the tall, graceful Fulani shepherds with their leather knapsacks, leather slippers, long whitish robes and dark brown turbans - had stalls. Some of their families had settled permanently in the houses along Otu market and sold delicious Hausa dishes, such as corn and bean dumplings laced with roasted meat in honey and the beef known as efi Awusa. Their women had large holes in their ears through which they wedged bright coral beads bought with the money they made buying and selling in Ibo towns.

People pushed and jostled, hawkers added to the din and in general everyone seemed to have a great deal to say. Ojebeta, though frightened and clutching Okolie, found it fascinating. So many people and so many different kinds of Ibo dialect! Her hold on her brother became tighter as she began to notice that people were staring at her. She felt humiliated when she saw a group of women with trays of cassava pulp on their heads laughing and pointing in her direction; one of them, trying to be modest, was looking away to hide her laughter.

Ojebeta glanced at her brother, then down at herself, and asked, "Why are they staring at me so, and laughing?"

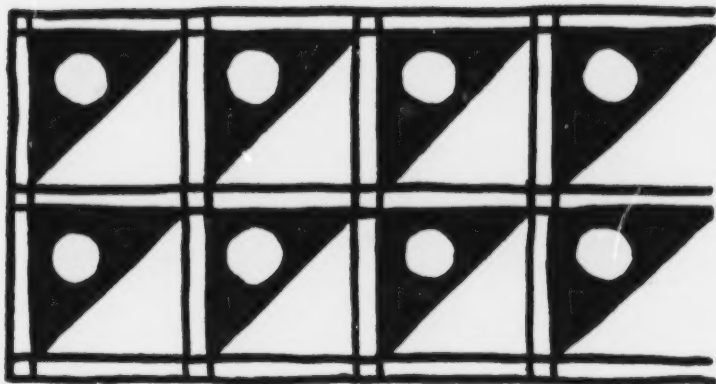
Okolie was finding it hard to control his nagging guilt, and as he guided her through the noisy crowds - through the stalls of the fish sellers and the yam sellers, towards a more open space in the market - he did not at first hear her question. He heard eventually, after she had tugged him and shouted louder; he knew, however, that to give her a full explanation would take long minutes, so he patted her shoulder as if to say she should not worry about those silly people who had nothing better to do than stand there laughing like people with broken heads.

He knew why they were laughing. It was not just because of Ojebeta's safety charms, the bells and cowrie shells that jingled and clanged when she made the slightest movement. It was because his sister also had a very interesting face. All over her features were traced intricate tattoos, the pattern of spinach leaves, with delicate branches running down the bridge of her nose, spreading out on her forehead and ending up at the top of her ears. On each cheek was drawn the outline of a large spinach leaf looking ready to be picked. It was not that many Ibos did not have facial tribal marks of different kinds, rather that a few would have put so many on the face of one little girl. But Ojebeta's mother Umeadi, when she realised that her daughter was going to live, had had a reason for going to the expense of engaging the services of the most costly face-marker in Ibuza. For with such a riot of tribal spinach marks on her only daughter's face, no kidnapper would dream of selling her into slavery. What was more, if she got lost her people would always know her, for although the patterns on her face might seem madness here to these Ibos from the East who frequented Otu Onitsha market, among the Western Ibos called the Aniochas it was a distinctive and meaningful design.

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Questions:

1. There is one item mentioned in this selection that indicates the description of the market occurred after Igbo contact with Europeans. Can you find it?
2. Why did you think Ojebeta was covered with charms and tatoos? What function might they have?
3. Write a description of your local shopping center "market." Similarities? Differences? Have you been to any local fairs, such as the Bay Area's Renaissance Faire? Describe it in relation to this African market.



THE AJA DANCE

Buchi Emecheta, The Bride Price, Chapter Eight

Background

Going through a coming of age ceremony was essential in order for an individual to become a full member of his or her community. The ceremonies were more than social occasions. They also established one's age group and helped bring the individual into the group. Skills were learned as were the secrets of the male or female societies.

One aspect of the ceremonies for girls was the aja dance. Here they learned dancing skills, showed off and got to know each other better. It was the time parents told the world that their daughters were now ready for marriage: in this regard it was a time to display them to prospective parents-in-law. This dance takes place in the 1950's, but again the activities are traditional. The town, Ibuze, was formed by nine villages and the coming-of-age events took place every three years. This group was born around the year when a number of girls had drowned in the Niger River. The Igbo rivers all are dedicated to goddesses. These girls are considered to have a special relationship with a river goddess.

There were various different societies in the town, most of them existing for social purposes; but in the main it was one's age group that determined membership. Age groups were created at three-year intervals, each one characterised by an important incident. (Children born during the civil war would become known as the children of Biafra, and when babies born at that time grow into adolescence they will hold meetings, organise dances, in the Big Eke market; they might have special dances which will take years of practice for the Christmases of their youth or the Ifejoiku yam festivals.)

Aku-nna was born at about the time when the River Niger drowned hundreds of young Ibuza girls between the ages of fourteen and eighteen. Most of them had gone to Onitsha on that particular market day to buy clothes for going away to their new husbands' homes, and crossing the river on their way back they were unfortunately overtaken by a storm

so violent that nearly all those in the open and unprotected canoes lost their lives. Only one or two of the canoe paddlers survived and that was because, since they lived close to the Niger, they were expert swimmers.

In all nine villages which formed the town of Ibuza these dead girls were mourned for months. Everyone knew, or thought they knew, why these girls had been lost: the River Niger was only claiming back her own. It was a predetermined and fatalistic belief, but it was enough to comfort the bereaved. Their acceptance of the idea that there was nothing anyone could have done to prevent it, the thought that their daughters had been chosen to serve at the court of the beautiful goddess of the river, nullified the pangs of pain to no small extent. After the period of mourning, the story went, many Ibuza women became pregnant, and when most of them subsequently gave birth to girls there was a joyous

understanding that the river goddess had given these new baby girls to replace the ones she had taken. That age group became associated with the year the River Niger ate the children of Ibuza - the Ibo people would never say that a victim had drowned but that he or she had been eaten by the river, for underpinning such an event was the belief that every river had a goddess who could do with one or two human sacrifices from time to time.

Aku-nna belonged to the popular age group. This was their fifteenth year, and few of them had yet married though the majority knew that this approaching Christmas would be their last in their fathers' houses. Christmas was a very important time of the year for everyone. Schools were closed and teachers were on holiday. Those who had ventured to other parts of the country usually came home around this time to show off their acquired wealth to their less fortunate relatives who had remained farmers all their lives. Aku-nna's age group were marking the occasion this year with a dance to entertain their people, and there was talk that they would also be going to places like Ubulu-ukwu and Isele Asagba to show off their skills in the intricate steps. So instead of going out to play in the moonlight, or amusing themselves in their mothers' huts with the local youths, they all spent the evenings learning their special aja dance.

Because she had been kept busy preparing for her examination, Aku-nna had not taken part in these sessions from the beginning, but now that it was over and there were two weeks to wait before the results were released, she needed to occupy herself with the dance practices, for she was confident that she would be successful. She realised that she had a good voice, trained

by years of singing in the church choir, so the songs were not too difficult to learn with the help of her cousin Ogugua. This break from school was a good opportunity to get to know her new friends more, and Aku-nna was beginning to enjoy it. Her circle of acquaintances widened to include not only Ogugua in a different and more intimate way but also several other girls such as Obiageli, whose grandmother sold a king of Ibo pudding made from ripe plantain, and Obiajulu, whose father was a wealthy redcap chief with many wives and very proud daughters.

The dance teacher was a tall man who could be taken for very young, although he was older than he looked, for he was still very slim and without any sagging flesh. He had inherited his first wife and she was much his senior in years; his second wife had borne him three children though sadly only one was living. He was locally known as Zik, a nickname borrowed from one of the politicians responsible for seeing Nigeria from colonialism into independence. The Ibuza Zik, who lived at Umuodafe, had the same proud carriage and charismatic bearing of the politician as a young man, and as he walked seemed to be forever scanning something in the clouds. His very long legs, which were always exposed on his way to the farm, or when he did his aja bit, ended up in a pair of the most pliable feet imaginable. He seldom wore shoes and as his heels never touched the ground he seemed to be perpetually dancing on the balls of his feet. He was very good at composing and singing the aja songs. And he was always laughing. He was simply that sort of rare specimen that seems unable to grow old.

Aku-nna liked Zik. He gave her solos to sing, and she was chosen to be one of the girls to sing the

praise names of the age group - telling the story of their birth in song, how they had been given to the people of Ibuza to comfort them for the loss they suffered in the deaths of the other drowned girls. Aku-nna was to sing Zik's praise name and tell the audience in aja song that, were it possible for relatives to intermarry, she would choose Zik. The others girls would join in the chorus, singing, "Ah...eee...!" in agreement.

The girls talked and dreamed about their outing dance. They worked and saved hard to buy their jigida, the red and black beads which they would wear above their bikini-like pants. Apart from these their tops would be bare, displaying the blue-coloured tattoos that went round their backs, then under their young breasts, and met at the heart. Their feet would also be bare, but small bells were to be tied around their ankles, so that when in the dance they jumped, or curtsied, or crawled in modesty, the bells would jingle in sympathy. It was to be the great moment of their lives and they knew it. In their old age, with clay pipes in their toothless mouths, they would turn to their grandchildren and say, "When we were young and our breasts were tight as tied ropes, we did the aja dance. It was the best dance in the whole land, and we did it."

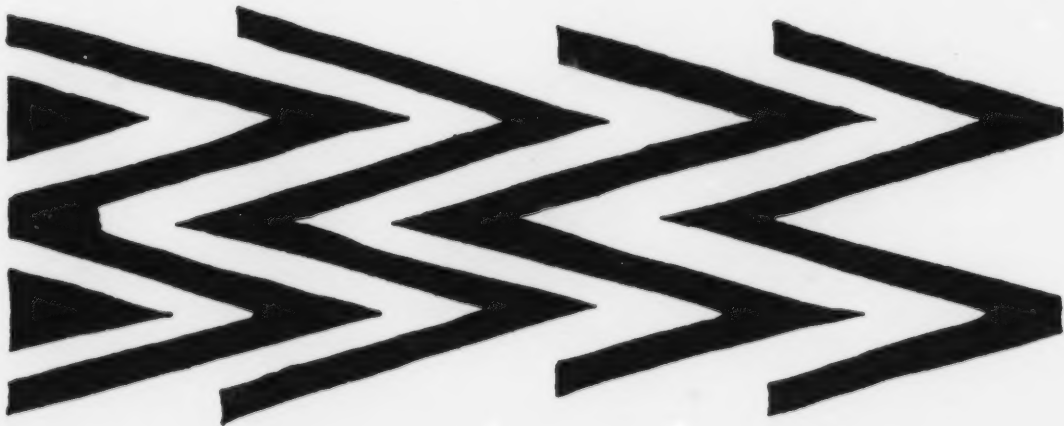
In the afternoon of one Olie market day, about twelve of them decided

to go for firewood. They had been to the stream that morning and had washed their clothes and bathed. Aku-nna had been claying the floor of her mother's hut, and welcomed the idea of a change. If she would have preferred to sit round and gossip with her friends, about their dance or about their men friends, she did not say, for she would rather follow the others than be left alone with her thoughts. She took her big cutlass and the ropes, and went with Obiajulu and Ogugua to fetch the rest. They felt safe and strong when there were many of them. They could tease old men on their way through their farms, they could sing, no enemy could terrify them; not that they had any enemies, but in Ibuza a young girl must be prepared for anything to happen. Some youth who had no money to pay for a bride might sneak out of the bush to cut a curl from a girl's head so that she would belong to him for life and never be able to return to her parents; because he had given her the everlasting haircut, he would be able to treat her as he liked, and no other man would ever touch her. It was to safeguard themselves against this that many girls cropped their hair very close; those who wanted long hair wore a headscarf most of the time. But when they were twelve strong, a man or boy who dared to attempt such a thing knew that he would be so mobbed that if he lived to go home to his mother she would not even recognize him.

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Questions:

1. When do you think American teenagers know they have "come of age" (are considered adults)? Is there an event, like the aja dance, that clearly defines this transition period? Is this a good idea or not? Are "coming out" (debutante) dances in the U.S. similar or not?
2. Why is the dance teacher considered a success in the eyes of the girls? In some ways this conflicts with Okonkwo's (Selection #1) definition of a successful man. How do you account for this?
3. The selection shows ways in which these coming of age girls had little power, and ways they had power. List. (Remember power of youth, of being considered beautiful, sought after.)
4. Discuss the following quotation from the selection "The Funeral" in relation to that selection and this selection, "The Aja Dance." "A man's life from birth to death was a series of transition rites which brought him nearer and nearer to his ancestors."



THE MOTHER'S EARLY LIFE

Buchi Emecheta, The Joys of Motherhood, Chapter Three

Background

This reading demonstrates the overriding importance of motherhood for a woman. This emphasis on motherhood remains true today. The selection also refers to Nnu Ego's personal *chi* being a slave woman. This relates to the time her father, Agbadi, took a woman who had been dedicated to the river goddess (an Osu slave) as a slave. Since these slaves were supposed to serve the gods and goddesses, this was an act against the spiritual world. Now Agbadi is suffering the consequences through the infertility of his favorite child.

"He who roars like a lion."

"My sons, you will all grow to be kings among men."

"He who roars like a lion."

"My daughters, you will all grow to rock your children's children."

Nnu Ego looked up from where she was kneeling and filling her father's evening pipe and smiled at him. "Your friend Obi Idayi is here, Father. I can hear people saying his praise names outside."

"I hear them too. From the number of voices, it seems there are many people out there, Nnu Ego."

"Yes, Father, they all come to play in our compound."

"It sounds as if they are mostly young men."

She smiled shyly again. "I know, Father."

Idayi entered. "My friend Agbadi, you must do something about this daughter of yours."

"He who roars like a lion," Nnu Ego said in salutation.

"You will live to rock your children's children, daughter of Agbadi and Ona. Go, daughter, and bring your father's best drink; and here, fill my pipe, also."

"Yes, Father."

"Listen, Agbadi, your outer compound looks as if there is a gathering or something. Let someone marry this girl. She has long passed the age of puberty. You don't want to be another Obi Umunna, do you?"

Both men laughed. "Stupid man, I can't bear to think of him," Agbadi said, puffing at his pipe. "The thing is, Nnu Ego is the only part of Ona that I have. Of course, she isn't arrogant like her mother, but the way she throws her head back when she looks you in the face, her light walk..."

"I know," Idayi agreed, remembering the happenings of over sixteen years before. "It all reminds you of Ona. Hmm...they don't make women like her anymore."

"No, they don't, my friend. I am glad we had the best of them."

Nnu Ego came in with the palm wine.

"Where is Idayi's pipe, daughter?"

"Oh, Father, I forgot. I shall go and bring it."

"Your daughter's mind is not here. She dreams of her man and her own home. Don't let her dream in vain."

After all, her age-mates are already having their first and second babies. Stop rejecting young men, Agbadi; let one of them marry her."

"I have promised Amatokwu that I will think about his son. He is one of those out there."

"They are not bad people, the Amatokwus. And that son has been a great help to his father during the past year. I don't see why he should not make a good household for Nnu Ego. She would be the senior wife."

Nnu Ego brought the pipe, now filled, and said, "I'll be outside with my friends if you want me, Father."

"Agbadi, we are getting on," Idayi sighed. "Here we are talking about Ona's daughter when it seems only yesterday that I heard Ona screaming as she was being conceived." The two men laughed long and deep.

The people of Ibuza were never to forget the night the people of Umu-Iso came for Nnu Ego. Her father excelled himself. He accepted the normal bride price, to show that he gave his blessing to the marriage. But he sent his daughter away with seven hefty men and seven young girls carrying her personal possessions. There were seven goats, baskets and baskets of yams, yards and yards of white man's cloth, twenty-four home-spun lappas, rows and rows of Hausa trinkets and coral beads. Her ornamented cooking pots and gaudy calabashes were attractively arranged round crates of clearest oils. A new and more beautiful effigy of the slave woman who was her chi was made and placed on top of all Nnu Ego's possessions, to guard her against any evil eye. It was indeed a night of wealth display. No one had ever seen anything like it. (Even today

if a new bride is too mouthy about her people, she will be effectively challenged: "But are your people more generous than Nwokocha Agbadi of Ogboli?")

Agbadi's heart was full to bursting point, when, the second day, the people from Amatokwu's compound came to thank him for giving them his precious daughter Nnu Ego. They did so with six full kegs of palm wine. Agbadi smiled contentedly and invited everybody in his own compound to drink.

"My daughter has been found an unspoiled virgin. Her husband's people are here to thank us."

Each visitor would peep into the kegs of palm wine and shout, "Oh, the kegs are very full. Nnu Ego has not shamed us. We pray that in less than ten months our in-laws will come and thank us again for the birth of her baby."

Agbadi and his life-long friend allowed themselves to be really drunk. "There is nothing that makes a man prouder than to hear that his daughter is virtuous. I don't like visiting families where the wedding kegs of palm wine are half filled, telling everybody that the bride has allowed herself to be tampered with," Idayi declared.

"When a woman is virtuous, it is easy for her to conceive. You shall soon see her children coming here to play," Agbadi said with assurance.

Nnu Ego and her new husband Amatokwu were very happy; yet Nnu Ego was surprised that, as the months passed, she was failing everybody. There was no child.

"What am I going to do, Amatokwu?" she cried to her husband, after the disappointment of another month.

"Just make sacrifices to that slave woman, and pay your father a visit. He may have a suggestion to make. Other than that, pray for Olisa to help us all. My father is beginning to look at me in a strange way, too."

"I am sure the fault is on my side. You do everything right. How can I face my father and tell him that I have failed? I don't like going there these days because his wives always rush out to greet me hoping that I am carrying a child. You can see the disappointment on their faces."

"We can only hope."

After a while, Nnu Ego could not voice her doubts and worries to her husband anymore. It had become her problem and hers alone. She went from one dibia to another in secret, and was told the same thing - that the slave woman who was her chi would not give her a child because she had been dedicated to a river goddess before Agbadi took her away in slavery. When at home, Nnu Ego would take an egg, symbol of fertility, and kneel and pray to this woman to change her mind. "Please pity me, I feel that my husband's people are already looking for a new wife for him. They cannot wait for me forever. He is the first son of the family and his people want an heir from him as soon as possible. Please help me." The story would repeat itself again the following month.

She was not surprised when Amatokwu told her casually one evening that she would have to move to a nearby hut kept for older wives, because his people had found him a new wife. "My father is desperate. It is now known that your chi came from the people down by the river. Their women are said to be very strong. I am sorry, Nnu Ego, but I cannot fail my people."

Amatokwu's new wife became pregnant the very first month. As the pregnancy became obvious, Nnu Ego shrank more and more into herself. In the privacy of her hut, she would look at herself all over. She would feel her body, young firm and like that of any other young woman. She knew that soft liquid feeling of motherhood was lacking. "O my chi, why do you have to bring me so low? Why must I be so punished? I am sorry for what my father did and I am sure he is sorry, too. But try to forgive us." Many a night she cried tears of frustration and hopelessness.

During the yam harvest Amatokwu, who only spoke to her when it was necessary, said crisply: "You will go and work with me on the farm today. Your young mate may be having my child any time now. She will stay home with my mother."

At the farm Amatokwu kept ordering her about as he would any farm help. She stood in the middle of the farm and said abruptly, "Amatokwu, remember when I first came to your house? Remember how you used to want me here with only the sky for our shelter? What happened to us, Amatokwu? Is it my fault that I did not have a child for you? Do you think I don't suffer too?"

"What do you want me to do?" Amatokwu asked. "I am a busy man. I have no time to waste my precious male seed on a woman who is infertile. I have to raise children for my line. If you really want to know, you don't appeal to me anymore. You are so dry and jumpy. When a man comes to a woman he wants to be cooled, not scratched by a nervy female who is all bones."

"I was not like this when I came to you," Nnu Ego said with a small

voice. "Oh, I wish I had the type of pride they say my mother had," she cried in anguish.

"Yes, your father could afford to have an Ona as his jewel, when he knew that he had enough sons to continue his line. And your mother...well, you are not like her. I will do my duty by you. I will come to your hut when my wife starts nursing her child. But now, if you can't produce sons, at least you can help harvest yams."

Nnu Ego shed tears in her heart all the way home. At home they were greeted with the news that a son had been born to Amatokuwu.

"Father, my position as senior woman of the house has been taken by a younger woman," Nnu Ego would lament on her visits to Agbadi's courtyard, after she had filled his pipe for him as she used to.

"Don't worry, daughter. If you find life unbearable, you can always come here to live. You are so thin and juiceless. Don't you eat enough?..."

Nwokocha Agbadi took his daughter

home. Most of his wives, now elderly, were sympathetic and nursed her mentally back to normal. They made her feel that even though she had not borne a child, her father's house was bursting with babies she could regard as her own. Her father renewed his expensive sacrifices to her *chi*, begging the slave woman to forgive him for taking her away from her original home. He told her through the rising smoke of the slaughtered animals that he had stopped dealing in slaves and had offered freedom to the ones in his household. He even joined a group of leaders who encouraged slaves to return to their places of origin, if they could remember from where they came. All those in his own compound who refused to go were adopted as his children; he had seen to it that proper adoption procedure was carried out, in that they were dipped in the local stream and had the chalk of acceptance sprinkled on them. It would be illegal for anyone in the future to refer to them as slaves; they were now Agbadi's children. He made all these concessions for the emotional health of his beloved daughter Nnu Ego.

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Questions:

1. Both this reading and the selection, "The Greatest Man of His Time," describe a patriarchal society. Give examples of this.
2. What symbols of power for a woman does this reading reveal? Her lack of power?
3. Why do you think having children was so important in this society?
4. Why do you think that when slavery was halted in the U.S. the American ex-slaves were, in general, treated worse than ex-slaves in Africa?
5. What examples can you give to show the Igbo belief in the power and intervention of gods and goddesses?



THE COLONIAL PERIOD: 1870'S - 1960
TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS

- I. Handout or read Background Essay on the Colonial Period in Nigeria.
- II. Suggestions for activities to tie readings together.
 - A. Compare lifestyle, decision-making, etc. in pre-colonial and colonial times.
 - B. Students interview older person(s) or immigrants to assess impact of change on one's life. Ask questions about changes in technology, male and female roles, inter-generational problems, changes in types of jobs available, etc. Summation: Is change good or bad?
 - C. If students are reading about colonial expansionism in Africa in their textbooks, can they compare/contrast the information found in the textbooks with their Achebe and Emecheta readings? List the facts they have learned from both sources. Whose perspective is represented in each source? What are their opinions on the validity of using subjective material, literature as well as any first person account, as a way of learning about history?
- III. Assign Readings.
- IV. Note: There is a Glossary of Terms found at the end of the unit.

THE COLONIAL PERIOD: 1870's - 1960.
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The process of colonization was lengthy and disrupted the existing society. By the time Nigeria became an independent nation in 1960, its people had entered a new world. The power of the traditional authorities had been undermined and the economy radically altered. Even more unsettling was the devaluation of many old traditions because of the European's belief in the superiority of Western institutions. The colonizers made little effort to understand African values or to judge them on their own terms. As a result, those Nigerians who assimilated into the Western world sometimes did so at the expense of having to reject their own heritage. The colonial legacy left Africans with the task of not only having to create new political and economic structures, but with having to regain a sense of their own worth and dignity.

Before British rule, Nigeria was, and still remains, the home of many peoples, some of whom would legitimately be considered nations in their own rights. By 1914, fourteen years after the British annexed the region, it became officially the nation of Nigeria. Since the Igbos had a lot of contact with Europeans they have been profoundly affected by the imposition of Western culture.

The search for gold and slaves had brought the first Europeans. Settlements were largely restricted to the coast, however, and various African peoples served as middle men between the interior and the coast. In 1806 the British began the abolition of the overseas slave trade by banning it on their own ships and Europeans became interested instead in palm oil and other raw materials, such as cotton, rubber and tin. And, as Henry Stanley's speech about Africa presented to Birmingham businessmen in England, 1878, shows, they were also interested in creating markets for their manufactured products.

There are forty million naked people beyond that gateway, and the cotton spinners of Manchester are waiting to clothe them. Birmingham's foundries are glowing with the red metal that shall presently be made into ironwork in every fashion and shape for them, and the trinkets that shall adorn those dusky bosoms: and the ministers of Christ are zealous to bring them, the poor benighted heathen, into the Christian fold. (1)

British trading interests began to desire more direct control over their spheres of influence and Lagos was established as a Royal Colony in 1862. Britain's "right" to the whole of Nigeria was conferred at the Berlin Conference of 1885, when the European countries divided Africa into territories each could annex.

First, the British Government chartered the Royal Nigeria Company to rule in its stead. It attempted the policy of indirect rule, which meant ruling through existing native leaders in an area, applying native laws, but advising them at all times. Indirect rule, however, did not work in Igboland. The stateless society of the Igbos was seen as anarchistic and the British sought to create order by a system of "warrant chiefs," persons selected by the

British to rule for them in a particular area. "Native Courts" were set up which were not really a court of the people's representatives, but rather people appointed by the British. Usually these hand picked people were not the traditional leaders. They became a new class, sometimes including people who were once slaves, and became a challenge to the old authorities. It was this group that the British used to carry out the day to day orders. The old leaders were humiliated by the British whenever possible in an attempt to weaken their power.

The Igbo's resisted their subjugation and the British had to use force. Their method was called "collective punishment." No effort was made to find guilty individuals - soldiers came to punish people and property in general. The blacksmith-made hunting guns of the local farmers could not match the guns of the British, and by 1920 resistance among the Igbo was quelled.

Igbo economy was developed to produce export crops such as cotton and cocoa. Palm oil flowed from the "Oil Rivers" of Igboland to lubricate European machinery and be made into soap, later to be sold back to the Nigerians. The most sweeping change came with the introduction of a new economy based on cash and on industrial technology. Nigerians were forced to accumulate money and often had to get a European education as a means of entering this new economy. The European control of the land and the concept that land could be bought and sold struck a blow to traditional customs. Large scale farming was encouraged to create surpluses for export. Large industries were established which drew people out of the villages to live near these new jobs. Men migrated more often than women to find jobs at the mines, factories and towns. The women left in the villages faced the hardship of doing the men's work as well as their own.

New towns and cities grew at the production sites. Although market towns had always been present in Igboland, these new centers were relatively large and were based on the needs of a Western culture. New jobs pulled people from the villages. But some went out of curiosity, eagerly seeking new material things and wanting to try a new life. The people who moved to these towns naturally were influenced by Western ways and conflicts grew between them and those who remained in the villages. Even greater was the distance between the few that eventually were sent abroad for an education and the people in the village, who often helped pay for the expense of this education. Called "Been-tos," the educated elite who had been to England felt the dual pressures of conforming to Western standards in order to get ahead and of meeting the demands of the village customs. They also were expected to use their new positions to produce favors. They became the men and the women of two worlds - not satisfying either.

Both sexes migrated to the towns, but men congregated there in far greater numbers and towns became principally a male preserve. Unmarried urban women were apt to be accused of being too Western and too loose. Those who were married found they had to work so the family might survive in this environment where one paid for, rather than produced, food and goods.

The colonial economy did bring some benefits. Those who could amass wealth found themselves in favored positions. Some, in fact, became so successful that British businessmen found themselves challenged. For example, the Igbo King Ja Ja established a monopoly on palm oil. He was ultimately

destroyed by the British who could not allow a local man to enjoy this kind of success.

The British linked distant regions of the country with roads and railways, creating larger markets. New trade possibilities also arose as new goods appeared - cotton, tobacco, cloth, beads, soap and gin. Those educated by the British learned the skills demanded by the colonial administration. Some Nigerians became clerks, teachers, civil servants, preachers, police constables, and interpreters. It was from this class that the stirrings for nationalism and independence began.

Most Nigerians, however, became menial workers or were hired for domestic work. Women in general were excluded from most of these new occupations. They continued laboriously working in their homes, fields, and in their traditional trading occupations. Those men who now worked as the white man's cook or launderer sometimes faced the ridicule of their wives; in traditional Africa men never did women's work!

Missionaries were very instrumental in bringing change. Since they were present in Nigeria from the mid-19th century on, some feel they paved the way for military and political penetration. Much of what they brought was desired by the Nigerians. Education, contact with the larger world, medical aid, and the training of village workers. The Church Ministry Society (C.M.S.) was the first to establish post-primary schools in the late 19th century. Catholics followed in 1913. But they also were bearers of a civilization which felt itself superior to the "backward" Africans. Nigerians who became Christians had to forsake or suppress many of their customs. For example, those with more than one wife had to give the others up: women and children suddenly lost the protection of a husband and home. Christianity introduced attitudes which devalued indigenous ways, widening the chasm between those who felt themselves Westernized and therefore "modern" and those they considered "bush" people living the old way in the village. Further, much of Christian education was geared to training a class that would serve the needs of the colonial masters. Following the Victorian attitudes toward women, females were taught domestic skills and those attitudes that would make them dutiful wives.

World War I introduced new elements into the colonial scheme. Africans by the legions were forced to join armies and fight in countries they knew nothing about for a war begun on European soil. Tens of thousands of Africans lost their lives or returned maimed. For their services there was no guarantee of a job back home, nor land, nor any of the freedoms they learned the Great War was supposed to represent. Rather the colonial government began to exert more power. One demand was for taxes to be levied to help pay for the roads and other services. The most common form was the hut tax; payment for living in one's own house. This tax was greatly disliked. When the government proposed in 1929 to tax women as well as men, the reaction of the Igbo women was to riot. Underlying the women's anger was the fact that the British had effectively removed their traditional avenues for representation. Ignoring the women's societies, women were supposed to be represented through the warrant chiefs. Therefore, in response to this new imposition, the women quickly mobilized. Using the argument that since they were the property of their husbands and could not be taxed twice, they caused repeated disruptions and damage throughout the year. The British did not tax the women, but took over many more village functions than before and attacked women's societies by calling them un-Christian.

World War II again used Africans in wars far from their soil. West Africans were pressured to produce even more food for the European continent. They worked for extremely low pay. The war at the same time brought higher food prices. But the war also revealed the vulnerability of the old colonial masters. By its end, it was clear that independence was going to come to many nations. The Western ideals of national freedom, social emancipation and political rights had taken hold. As one Nigerian soldier wrote at the end of the war, "We have seen what we have fought for. That is freedom. We want freedom, nothing but freedom." (2) Nigerians successfully pressured for their own independence and achieved it in 1960.

Footnotes:

1. Basil Davidson, *THE STORY OF AFRICA*, Mitchell Beazley, International Limited, Mill House, London, England, 1984, p. 172.
2. *IBID*, p. 219.

FELENZA

Buchi Emecheta, The Slave Girl, Chapter Two

Background

Textbooks often note that until Europeans discovered the cure for diseases, such as malaria and yellow fever, they were restricted in their conquest of Africa. Few describe the impact of European diseases on the Africans. The coming of "felenza" (influenza) was the first sign in the village Ibuza that the villager's world had changed. This is an example of the limited influence of the British over daily life. The "potokis" are Portuguese who came to the Benin Empire before the British (16th century). Vocabulary words found in the glossary include: Benin Empire, Portuguese, and Germans.

"Pom! Pom! Pom! The rumours that have been going round are true. Pom! There is a kind of death coming from across the salty waters. It has killed many people in Isele Azagba, it is creeping to Ogwashi, it is now coming to us. They call it Felenza. It is white man's death. They shoot it into the air, and we breathe it in and die. Pom! Pom...."

People, some on the verge of eating their evening meal, some still thudding their yam for their meal in their wooden mortars, listened helplessly as the gongman went round Ibuza with his unwelcome news. The town's runner must have returned. He must have told his tale of woe to the diokpa, the oldest man, then there must have been consultation among the elders and it must have been decided that the whole town should be warned. Everybody felt a kind of chill; not that an epidemic was anything new to the people of Ibuza, but at least previously they had always known what measures to take to avert mass disaster. They had experienced diseases like smallpox, which was so feared that they gave it the name "Nna ayin" -- "Our

Father" -- for at that time smallpox meant death; they knew that to stop it spreading throughout the villages any victim had to be isolated, so when somebody was attacked he would be taken into the bush and left there to die. All his worldly possessions would be burned, and no one would be allowed to mourn for him. So much feared was smallpox.

But this felenza was a new thing that the "Potokis" had shot into the air, though everyone wondered why.

"We have done them no wrong," people said. "They came to places like Benin and Bonny, bought healthy slaves from our people and paid us well. And this is how they thank us."

Rumor had it that some Europeans had been killed in Benin (Okwuekwu was one of those who carried the rumour when he returned from Idu with the copper charms for his daughter); but they had had their revenge at the time by killing many of the people there and exiling the rightful king of Idu. Why send them this kind of death now? The

people of Ibuza pondered, speculated and hoped that it would never come to them, for where were they to run to?

But soon it came to Ogwashi, and within days men started dropping dead on their farms. Death was always so sudden that the relatives were too shocked to cry....

This speculation was buttressed by the fact that after a month the crisis seemed to have passed. It was then that Ibuza began to hear explanations of what had caused the disease. Before that time most people living in the interior of Nigeria did not know that the whole country now belonged to the people

called the British who were ruling them indirectly through the local chiefs and elders. Now, in the year 1916, the rumors said that the new colonial masters were at war with their neighbors "the Germanis"; and the latter fought the British by blowing poisonous gas into the air. When you breathed it, you died. Many inside Ibuza were asking themselves what they had to do with the Germanis, and the Germanis with them. There was no one to answer their questions; even the diokpas did not know the answers. They consoled themselves by making innumerable offerings of goats and chickens in the hope that their god Olisa would be well placated and would protect them.

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Questions:

1. What similarities did the people of Ibuza see in the Potokis and Germanis? Why would the Germanis be mistaken for the Potokis?
2. Diseases for which no cure is known frighten people. List some examples of diseases today for which there is not cure? (Cancer, AIDS, arthritis)
3. The people of Ibuza asked the diokpa what to do about the disease. Who do people consult in the U.S. today?
4. What peoples in other parts of the world were equally devastated by the introduction of foreign diseases?
5. What do you think the people of Ibuza thought of the Potokis, Germanis and British?

A RICH RELIGION
Buchi Emecheta, The Slave Girl, Chapter Nine

Background

This is a continuation of the story of Obejeta, whose parents died in the "felenza" epidemic. She has been brought to the Onitsha market and sold to distant, wealthy relatives, the Palagadas. Ma Palagada is the most important member of the family; one of the strong market women for which West Africa is noted. She is the product of a European father, long gone, and African mother. The children of her first "marriage" also have European fathers. Clifford, the son, therefore is very Western and has received a European education. This family would be very receptive to Christianity and, as this selection relates, interested even more in the economic benefits it brought.

One evening when the girls were busy in the kitchen, they saw the Palagadas seeing off a white woman. It was Ijeoma who saw them first and called to the others.

"Come, everybody, come and see Ma and Pa talking to an oyibo!

Of course they all ran out, including the big Jienuaka. He left the wood he was breaking for the fire, dropped his axe and went to the gate leading out of the backyard, where he could watch with the others unseen. They were not the only ones fascinated by the sight. Many children from up and down the narrow street came out, following the "oyibo" in a crowd a little distance from her. A few of the local people, especially those who traded with the foreigners at Otu market, had seen red-faced men, who were supposed to be white. Those men, however, seldom brought their wives with them. They usually made do with local girls, giving them babies and leaving them; that was why places near the sea, such as Sapele, Onitsha and Warri, were full of so many "half-castes". But here was a white woman, a rare sight.

"I wonder how Ma understands what she says," mused Ojebeta, as they all pressed against each other to get a better glimpse of this strange person.

"Ma does not understand, but Clifford does. Besides they say the woman oyibo speaks a kind of Ibo. You have to listen very carefully to understand it -- she speaks through her nose, and pronounces her words in a funny way," Jienuaka volunteered, breathing heavily as he was wont.

There was a gentle ripple of laughter among them, the kind of laughter that can be identified with suppressed making fun of overlords and supposed "betters".

Encouraged by their mutual mischievous joy, Ijeoma remarked, "How starved she looks! See how her hips are flat and shapeless, as if she was a lizard lying flat on its stomach. She must be ill all the time."

"Perhaps that is why they don't bring their wives to these shores, and instead make our girls have children the colour of unripe palm fruits."

They all laughed again and someone, probably Chiago, wondered if a woman as thin and ill-looking as that could ever bear children of her own.

Nobody replied to that, for now Jienuaka called them to go back to their duties. Even in the short minute of freedom, that slave mentality was still dominant in him. Jienuaka was the type who, although he could enjoy a joke, would never be disloyal to his master. It never occurred to any of them, not even the other male servants, to say "no" to Jienuaka, for he was such a formidably big person, so tall, so broad of shoulder and so strong that his nickname -- "Agwuele" -- meant a giant.

Within a few days they knew, or suspected, why the weak-looking white woman had paid them a visit. Her husband was the new United Africa Company chief, and she helped him to run the local Church Missionary Society school. She wanted Ma Palagada to send some of her children there. However, whereas people then were still very reluctant to consign their actual children to these foreign places of learning, it was acceptable to send domestic slaves so long as their going did not tamper with their daily tasks. Ma Palagada could not spare her girls on weekdays, or on market days; but the day called Sunday came only once in seven. She did not mind that, especially as the white woman, Mrs. Simpson, said that on Sundays the girls would only stay for a few hours after church.

For the girls it was a great excitement. They had new outfits made for them in plain materials, outfits that did not have separate tops and lappas but that were joined together -- what Mrs. Simpson called a gown and the girls

called "gam". They were quite shapeless, with puffed sleeves. The girls were also made to wear some hats, tied on to their heads with cloth round the sides. In church they were taught that women's heads were holy and should be covered.

More market stalls were assigned to Ma Palagada as an indirect result of this, and because of her connections she could buy any import at wholesale price before her rivals had time to do so. So she became doubly rich. Seeing that conversion from nothing to Christianity brought Ma financial rewards, a number of smaller traders followed suit, and when the "nobodies" saw that the rich were all going to this new place called church, many were converted to this fashionable religion.

It was with this great enthusiasm that the first Christ Church Cathedral was built. Church-going every morning became a feature of the Palagada home, and Ma was regarded everywhere as an enviable and god-fearing woman.

"Does she not drink tea in the afternoon? Does she not wear 'gam' every Sunday?" her neighbors asked.

However, even under the influence and tuition of this Mrs. Simpson, it was difficult for Ma Palagada and her society women contemporaries to go completely European. There was no problem about wearing the straight-shaped English dresses, even with their overfed stomachs; but then they would add the type of heavy headtie that went with native lappas, and they would also place an extra piece of material on their shoulders, regardless of whether the English lady thought it appropriate. This was because the Ibo belief was that a complete woman must have two lappas round

her waist, not just one. You might sometimes put the second piece of cloth over your shoulders, but you must be seen to use both as befitted a properly married woman: so Ma Palagada and her group did not wish to be thought of with disrespect. The correctness of what they felt seemed to be confirmed for them when one day, during the regular Wednesday women's class meeting that had been established, Mrs. Simpson showed them a picture of the woman she said had ruled England. The women gasped at her size.

"Look, no wonder she had many children like us. She was well fed," Ma Palagada remarked in an aside to her friend Ma Mee.

"And look, she has her ntukwasi over her shoulder."

"Why then does this one Mrs. Simpson wear so few clothes, when she ought to dress to look respectable?"

Ma Mee in her newly converted attitude knew that it was a sin to backbite -- did not the Bible say it was like killing your neighbor? -- so she asked the Englishwoman direct: "Why do you not dress like your queen?"

Mrs. Simpson, who in her heart of hearts regarded these women as having the brains of children, said patiently, "Because it is too hot for me here. The queen wore more clothes and in darker colors because in my country it can be so cold that dew and rain form themselves into snow. Also her husband had died when this picture was taken." Then she had to go into a great lengthy explanation to describe what "snow" meant, for none of these women in their wildest imagination could think of what it might be. Nonetheless she managed

to convey to them the fact that snow was white, and that it was formed from water; it would be essential that they understood when they came across the simile "as white as snow" in their Ibo-translated Bibles.

As far as Ma Palagada's girls were concerned, this new religion they learned once a week was the greatest thing to happen to them -- getting ready for church and then, later in the day, the Sunday school they called "Akwukwo-Uka". Ojebeta would never forget the first church harvest festival she experienced. Weeks before Ma had brought them all new material, and in order that they would learn how to sew she made them make their own clothes. Chiago was now an expert in sewing. Before they started going to Akwukwo-Uka, she would simply look at you and guess your measurements, and would then proceed to make the blouse or whatever it was you wanted. But she had since learned to count and use her tape rule. Ojebeta and the others could not make a "gam" or full dresses yet, though after Chiago had done the cutting they would have to stitch them all over again.

Intrigued, Ojebeta had one day asked Chiago: "Why is it that first you get a nice piece of material -- a perfect piece, which you ought to just throw over your body exactly as it is -- and what you do then is tear it into pieces. But then you start sewing the pieces back together again. It doesn't make sense."

Chiago had to think for some time before she answered, for she saw Ojebeta's point of view. "If you don't cut the cloth into pieces and then stitch them together, the dress would have no shape, and we would have no work to do in the market. We would just be sitting

about doing nothing, and that would be no good to anybody, especially us. You see, we make things for outsiders and they pay our Ma, and that helps her to feed and clothe us."

On the latter point Chiago was quite wrong; for the amount of money the girls made for Ma from sewing alone was enough to keep the household going. In allowing her girls to go to Mrs. Simpson's classes, she had allowed them to become elite slaves. They soon learned to read in Ibo from a green book called *Azu-Ndu*, and what they found out from the printed word gave them endless amusement; they read and re-read the stories, the sayings, until they knew most of the little book off by heart. So it was to Ma's stalls that people brought their material to be made into the type of gown that the white women wore, because there you were properly measured and the girls who sewed could read from books. It was because of this attitude from customers that Ma's

son Clifford, who was becoming very interested in his mother's business, advised her to increase her charges. She did this, and their profit and prestige went up even higher, for the people of Otu Onitsha, true to human nature, valued more what they paid dearly for. It seemed that every woman wanted to be able to say, "I am not a pagan, I go to church, and my church 'gam' was made for me at the Palagada stalls in Otu Onitsha."

The girls were busier than ever as the first church harvest approached. Many of the successful people who had made a great deal of money from selling palm kernels instead of slaves were converted to some form of Christianity, which meant that they all wanted to wear some new outfit for the harvest festival. The girls were encouraged to work even harder by the expectation that they too would have something new to wear, for they knew that Ma Palagada liked to plan little surprises even for her lowliest servant.

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Questions:

1. What do drinking tea in the afternoon as wearing "gam" indicate?
2. Compare Ma Palagada and her friends' first impressions of Mrs. Simpson, with the picture of the Queen of England.
3. How do you think you would be described by the women in this reading?
4. What benefits did Ma Palagada receive from her association with the Europeans?
5. There is a classic description of the colonial economy in this reading. Find it. Who benefits the most, England or Nigeria?
6. What is absurd about the simile "as white as snow" in an Ibo-translated Bible?



THE WOMEN'S WAR

Buchi Emecheta, The Slave Girl, Chapter Eleven

Background

Ibo women in 1929 created a series of violent demonstrations against the British when they believed they were to be taxed. A number of things about them surprised the Europeans. One was the vehemence of the women. The other was the women's solidarity and their rapid communication with each other. The disturbances continued sporadically in some areas into the early 1930's.

One evening Ma Palagada came back to her stalls from one of the innumerable market meetings, very flustered and sad. Ojebeta was sitting on a stool opposite her with heaps of lappas she was finishing, while Ma from her velvet-covered seat began to talk to no one in particular.

"I am not going to take part in such senseless fighting. Why can't the men do it themselves? Why can't we talk things over with the white men? It is all silly and idiotic...."

As if Ma's voice had been carried by the wind to Ma Mee's stall, the latter walked up to Palagada in all her majesty and spoke in a voice that was not too friendly.

"Why do you not wish to fight the so-called white men? Because you are their friend? Don't you know that if we women have to pay tax it will affect you also? You too will have to pay tax. Did you ever hear of a country where women are asked to pay for their existence? No, we must nip it in the bud."

The woman in the stall opposite Ma Palagada's, Madam Okeke -- one of the few Onitsha traders who was thin -- came over as well, visibly agitated and angry at Ma Palagada. "We look towards people like you and your husband, Palagada, to help us," she said shrilly, "and now you're being lukewarm about it."

Ma Palagada could take all these accusations no more. She stood up, drawing herself up into her full height and bulk, and thundered at the two women and at the small crowd that was beginning to gather in front of her stall.

"If you feel that I'm a Judas, you are lying. Go on and kill the missionaries and white traders, go

on! I don't say that we should pay taxes. What my husband and I are saying is that we should all refuse to pay, and let them do their worst."

"But these are your friends, these so-called missionaries. Pooh! The so-called people of God!" sneered Madam Okeke as she chewed something furiously in her mouth. She was a very bitter woman, who always tied her lappa tightly around her waist as if she was ready to go to war at any time of day. One could see the nerves in her forehead twitching as she attacked Ma verbally. Her angry eyes wandered and took in everything in Ma Palagada's stall, saying eloquently with that action: How else could you have managed to gather so much wealth if not for the reason that you warm yourself to the white people in our midst?

Without looking at Madam Okeke, Ma Palagada sensed what was going on in her mind and what all these people were thinking. Trade was not as profitable as it used to be during the days of the legitimate slave traders. Now the Niger people had to rely on trading in palm kernels and cloth, mainly cotton from Lancashire in England; and these new types of trade required a great deal of capital investment, rather than just physical strength. If only these people could think back far enough they would realise that Ma had started with very good resources and that her present wealth was not to be accounted for by the mere fact that that she went on some evenings to the Simpsons' house to drink tea. And if they had bothered to check they would also have realised that Pa Palagada, although he might still take walks with his wife in the evenings as the Church encouraged husbands to do, was not at all faithful or in love with her. But people's memories could be so short, and

their eyes could be so blind when they refused to see.

She remembered a saying of the people of Iboza, where her mother had come from, that if you cooked dinner for the crowd, the crowd would finish it and even ask for more, but if the crowd should decide to cook dinner for you, an individual, you could never finish it. She had to compromise, to save herself, her family, and to pre-

serve her health, which was still playing her up.

"All right," she said, stepping down and quickly agreeing with them, "when you are ready, I shall be ready too. I'm not paying any tax, that much I know. Maybe when they see how determined we are, they will let our custom be -- the custom that says only our men should pay for their heads, because they own us."

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Questions:

1. The Nigerians call these demonstrations "The Women's War;" the British refer to it as "The Aba Riots." Why the difference? The argument the women used to support their resistance was based on tradition. What was it?
2. Discuss the following proverb in relationship to the solidarity of women's societies. "If you cook a dinner for the crowd, the crowd finishes it; if the crowd cooks a dinner just for you, you could never finish it."

NNAIFE THE WASHERMAN

Buchi Emecheta, The Joys of Motherhood, Chapter Four

Background

This is a continuation of the story of Nnu Ego. After her father returns her Bride Price to her first husband, she is sent to Lagos, the capital, to marry Nnaife. He washes clothes for a European couple and is a great disappointment to Nnu Ego after the physically strong men of her village, Ibuza.

Her husband Nnaife would get up at six in the morning by the clock the master and his wife had given him. He would then pull on his khaki shorts, eat the night's left-over food, and dash to Dr. Meers's part of the compound to start doing their washing. He used two giant tin bathtubs, grey and big enough to take up to three people at the same time. He would sit on a kitchen stool by the first bath and wash all manner of articles, towels, women's nightdresses and what-have-you. Then, in mid-morning, he would move to the second bathtub and start the rinsing. Intermittently, he had to fetch water from the garden pump, carrying a tin bucket in each hand. After the day's washing had been hung up to dry, he would go into the pantry and fill the pressing-iron with coal. So regularly timed was his daily progression that one could tell the hour of the day by what he was doing. They gave him the grand title "Nnaife, the washerman". So good was he at his job that, for a small consideration the master's friends often borrowed him. He only had half a day off in the week and that was on Sundays, when he worked till two o'clock in the afternoon. So he had little time to take notice of Nnu Ego, and she did not look or ask for any attention from him. She had come to accept him as one of the inevitabilities of fate.

She had at first rejected his way of earning a living and had asked him why he could not find a more respectable job.

Nnaife had scoffed and told her that in a town people never minded what they did to get money, as long as it was honest. Did she not think the work easier and much more predictable than farming? But every time she saw her husband hanging out the white women's smalls, Nnu Ego would wince as someone in pain. The feeling would cut deeper when, with sickening heart, she heard Nnaife talking effusively about his treatment of dainty clothes and silk. The man was actually proud of his work, she realised.

On Sunday afternoons, when he was free, they would walk from Yaba to Ebute Metta and then to Lagos Island, where the Ibo community held their own Christian services. Nnu Ego did not understand what Christianity was all about but, like any bride brought from home, she simply followed in her husband's footsteps. They would return on a bus which for her was a great treat, that coming home in style.

On the first Sunday of every month, Nnaife would take her to the Ibuza family meeting, also on Lagos Island. Most of their people lived in the older part of the town near

their places of work at the dock-yard. The few in domestic service lived a little outside the town, in the quieter and newer parts, with their white masters.

She learned early in their married life to economise, since Nnaife earned little. After going to the market on Saturdays, she would buy soda soap, wash all their clothes and, with a towel tied round her waist, hang them out in the sun. She would then lock herself indoors and, however much the other wives in the compound called her, she would not emerge until their clothes were dry. Then she would fold and press them with her odo handle, and put them under their pillows to make them smoother, ready for the next day.

One Sunday she toyed with the idea of telling Nnaife that she would like to stay at home, just for a change. After all, not only did church mean little to her, it was becoming monotonous attending week after week.

She left Nnaife's food on their one table, placed the hand-washing bowl with water in it conveniently near for him and, contrary to her nature and to custom, sat and watched him eat.

After a few mouthfuls Nnaife looked up. "You stare at me as if you don't want me to eat the food you cooked. You know a wife is not allowed to do that."

"That applies in Ibuza, not here," Nnu Ego said.

"Well, whether we are in Ibuza or not, I am still your husband and still a man. You should not sit there staring at me."

"A man, huh? Some man."

"What did you say? Did I not pay your bride price? Am I not your owner? You know, the airs you put on are getting rather boring. I know you are the daughter of Agbadi. Pity he didn't marry you himself and keep you by his side forever. If you are going to be my wife, you must accept my work, my way of life. I will not have it any other way. You must understand that. So go out and gossip with Cordelia, and let me finish my food in peace."

Nnu Ego stood up angrily and declared: "If you had dared come to my father's compound to ask for me, my brothers would have thrown you out. My people only let me come to you here because they thought you were like your brother, not like this. If things had worked out the way they should have done, I wouldn't have left the house of Amatokwu to come and live with a man who washes women's underwear. A man indeed!"

Her lot was not worse than those of her Ibo neighbors, the cook's wife and the wife of the steward. Even those girls from Ibuza who now lived on the island with their husbands told her many a time that she was lucky not to be married to a man working in the docks. The dock workers would go away for weeks and weeks, leaving their young wives to have babies on their own, with no help except that given by neighbors. They had told her the story of a girl called Ngboyele whose husband was working at a dock in Port Harcourt: she had her first baby in the night, and she never stopped bleeding until she died. She and her child had been buried ten days before her husband Okeibuno returned. It took the man a long time to recover from the shock.

When Nnu Ego later confided to Cordelia, the wife of Ubani, she had laughed at her moanings about her husband and said, "You want a husband who has time to ask you if you wish to eat rice, or drink corn pap with honey? Forget it. Men here are too busy being white men's servants to be men. We women mind the home. Not our husbands. Their manhood has been taken away from them. The shame of it is that they don't know it. All they see is the money, shining white man's money."

"But," Nnu Ego had protested, "my father released his slaves because the white man says it is illegal. Yet these our husbands are like slaves, don't you think?"

"They are all slaves, including us. If their masters treat them badly, they take it out on us. The only difference is that they are given some pay for their work, instead of having been bought. But the pay is just enough for us to rent an old room like this."

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Questions:

1. What does Nnu-Ego think of her husband's job?
2. List the differences between the lifestyle of the people in Lagos with the village people of Ibuza.
3. In the village, Nnu Ego would be one of several wives and would have to work hard in the fields. What are the advantages of city life for her? the disadvantages? On whom is city life harder, Nnaife or Nnu-Ego?
4. What jobs in the U.S. can you identify as being considered "new" or "non-traditional" for men? Why have these changes occurred? Why did they occur in colonized Nigeria?
5. At the end of this passage, Nnu Ego and Cordelia are talking about work and slavery. What does Nnu Ego mean when she says, "They are all slaves, including us."?

MEN AT WAR

Buchi Emecheta, The Joys of Motherhood, Chapter Twelve

Background

This reading occurs later during World War II when Nnaife has become a grasscutter for the government, an important source of employment and possible advancement in the colonial era. Nnu Ego has begun to have children and has been presented, by Nnaife, with a second wife. This new wife has children and Nnu Ego has taken up trading to help feed the mob. But Nnaife has begun to drink his money away and the wives have gone on strike by refusing to feed him. Vocabulary words found in the glossary include dash, big man, garri, call-and-response, and lorry.

It was difficult for men with no qualifications to find work in the early 1940s. In growing numbers they were leaving their village homes to look for jobs in Lagos, and this phenomenon was robbing many areas of their most able-bodied men. Those who left reckoned that it was better to go and work for a master or a company rather than stay on their own farms where income depended upon the whims of the weather and upon their own physical strength. In such circumstances when men grew old their sons naturally took over the farming of the family lands, and their daughters, from wherever they were married, from time to time gave little contributions of tobacco and soap or chunks of wood for warming the fireplaces (for inland in the villages, especially during the Harmattan season, the temperature drops very sharply sometimes to twelve degrees Centigrade or below, which to old people used to the weather being over twenty degrees can seem very cold indeed). But the younger generation like Nnu Ego and her friends preferred to leave this type of life behind. The Yorubas had been in Lagos a long time, since the fall of the great Benin Empire, but the Ibos were one of the last groups to follow this drift. Though they

missed the sense of belonging which existed in their village communities, the advantage of working in the towns was that wages were more regular; the payment might be meagre, but they soon learned to tailor their needs to their means.

People seldom took their jobs lightly. They could not afford to. Nnaife was among the lucky few who found work with the government; thus employed, one could hardly be sacked and could rest assured the morning would never come when one was told that was that and there was no more work to be done. On top of that, if one stayed in government service long enough, one was sure of a small pension, something still quite new to most Ibos. Not many people enjoyed such luxuries; those who did were from the few privileged families who came into contact with the Europeans early, and who instinctively recognised the coming trends and were willing to change. In places like Asaba and Iboza, Ibo towns in Western Nigeria, the inhabitants were very hostile to the arrival of Europeans, so that the few white people who came fled for their lives. The graves of many missionaries and explorers tucked inside the forest bushes tell this tale.

However, Nnaife had been willing to try out this new venture. He did not mind being a grass-cutter, because he knew that one day he would be lucky: he would give the proper handshake to the right clerk who would push his papers in the office for him to be transferred from grass-cutting to employment in the workshops. This was one of the reasons why he still sometimes attended church, for most of the preachers and lay-readers were clerks from the railway, and one of them called Okafor had even promised to see to his papers, after Nnaife had given him the appropriate "dash" of five pounds. Occasionally Nnaife would see this Okafor and shout, "Good morning, sahi!" and the other would grunt his reply; no one expected a "big man" to be too familiar with such subordinates as labourers and grass-cutters.

There were about twelve of them in his group, and they had devised a way of working harmoniously with one another. One person in turn would be the look-out, watching to see when the head man approached. The others would cut the grass at a leisurely pace, for they had a saying, "Na government work, ino dey finish": it is government work, it can never come to an end. They justified their slowness by saying, "If we finish all the work, what will our children do? So we had better take our time." In the railway compound at Yaba, Lagos, the grass-cutters did not need to worry themselves about what they would do the following day because before a week was out the grass would spring again ready to be cut. They therefore seemed to be going round in circles, ending up where they began. After a while, one got used to this type of job. Not only did Nnaife get used to the routine, he would have preferred to go on working this way, but for the occasional lack of money...

On the morning after the problems with his wives, he sat down with his colleagues under the cashew tree, none of them much in a hurry to start their daily work. Nnaife had not brought any food for his breakfast and the others knew why.

"Are your women still on strike?" asked one skinny man by the name of Ibekwe.

The others laughed and so did Nnaife, helping himself to Ibekwe's garri and some dried fish from another person. They all shared their food, so they did not mind him taking part of their provisions.

"No," said Nnaife in between mouthfuls. "The shop steward came to me just by the road there, to say that she is repentant and that she admits she was in the wrong."

The others laughed again. "You mean they have given up so soon?"

Nnaife shook his head. "I don't think the other one has. The senior one is a trader, and she knew that if she didn't do something the family - with the exception of myself, of course - would end up eating all her profits."

"That's why it's good to encourage women to trade, so that they know the value of money. What did you say to her?"

"I didn't say much. You see, I suspect she is expecting another child, judging from the way she is behaving. She is usually a very good woman. She comes from a big household."

"Pity she could not bring her household here to help you cut the grass," put in another worker as he got up to look out for the head man. He gave the sign that the boss was on his way, so the others

set about swinging their cutlasses in the air, leaving their half-eaten food under the tree, and started to sing as they worked. One man would clear his throat and start a song and the others would answer in the call-and-response pattern typical of African music. Their cutlasses would swing in the air during the call and would land with a swish on the grass towards the end of the refrain. Watching them work, and the rise and fall of cutlasses, was an entertainment in itself. One enthusiastic worker would sometimes stop cutting for a moment or two to do a solo dance before going back to his work. Of course when the head man went away they soon stopped to get their breath back.

During that afternoon, they noticed that there were army trucks coming into the yard. They wondered what was going on though they could not stop to stare very long. They saw European officers with formidable moustaches, looking strong and wicked, and there were the tall Hausa soldiers with their truncheons who were known locally as Korofos, army policemen. This latter group was very feared. Their methods of searching for deserters were well known. Many young Nigerian men thought it would be fun to join up, especially after going to the Labour Office day in, day out, and having their efforts at finding jobs thwarted, and some found out too late that the rigours of army life were not for them and would run home to their mothers. These army policemen left no stone unturned to locate such a deserter. Perhaps part of the reason they were feared was that few people in the south of Nigeria understood their language; some said they spoke a kind of language called "Munshi." But whatever they spoke, there was no doubt that they were much taller than the average south-

erner; most of them were at least six feet three inches tall and many were much more than that. On this day in the railway yard the Korofos were parading up and down as if in search of something. They watched the grass-cutters singing but showed no reaction. The European officers looked beyond them as if they did not exist, just as adults might look indulgently at children, shrug their shoulders and say, "Let them have their fun."

There was the usual stampede when the whistle blew and it was time to wash and go home. Some of those who moved fast were already on the bridge over the railway line. Nnaife wished his friends good night and was on the verge of joining the crowd that had just reached the bridge when from all corners came the Korofos swinging their truncheons in the air. A European officer stood behind them saying something to the Korofos. It was not clear what was happening, but by the look of things it was not anything pleasant. Many of the workers ran back into their workshops, others ran out into the open street.

Up went the truncheons and the Korofos were giving orders: "From 'ere to 'ere! Gwo, gwo into the lorry - gwo, gwo!"

Men screamed like women as some of them were caught. Nnaife was one of them. He found himself being pushed and bundled into the tarpaulin-covered army lorry.

"Why? Why?" workers asked each other. Nobody had an answer.

Nnaife saw a few of the men try to make an escape, but they only felt heavy truncheon blows landing on their shoulders, and their squeals of pain warned the others to stay put and be good "boys."

"We don't have slavery any more, so why should grown men be captured in broad daylight?" Nnaife wondered. He was too stunned to think of his family; all that went through his mind was the unfairness of it. He was so preoccupied with this that he could not make out if they were going to Ikoyi barracks on the island or the ones in Apapa or even the ones he had seen so often at Igbobi in Yaba. He was hungry, he was shocked and he was angry. How could one resist against men armed with heavy sticks and guns?

They were ushered into an open field and their names were taken. They were all told to have something to eat and that an officer was coming to talk to them. Nnaife was reluctant at first but seeing others eating he too ate, telling himself that at least the problem of hunger was solved, so that when they let them go he would have enough strength to walk home. He became really alarmed when, after the food, a medical doctor came to examine them one by one. Nnaife knew then that he was done for. It was at that moment that he looked round and saw that his fellow worker Ibekwe was there, looking as stunned as he was. They communicated with each other through looks; there was little they could do but wait and see. The doctor, an Indian, knocked at Nnaife's chest, peered into his throat and ears, before pronouncing him "all right," that much Nnaife heard. All right for what? He was about to turn round and ask, but a Korofo pushed him along to make room for another man who came in and stripped to the waist like himself.

In the corridor where they were asked to wait, most of them had subsided into silence, their minds busy as clocks and their eyes watchful. Soon the medical was over. Some people were called, and

Nnaife never saw them again. He and Ibekwe and about thirty others remained, whereas sixty or so of them had been packed into the lorry.

In another room they were eventually told why they had been so enlisted. They were to join the army.

"Army!"

A few men had the courage to shout abuse; others joined in, and an officer with a moustache allowed them to go as mad as they could. After a while, during which time some men wept with tears pouring shamelessly from their eyes, he demanded silence. Later they were told that their wives and relatives would be well cared for. When asked about his next of kin, Nnaife gave the name of his wife Nnu Ego. He was told that the large sum of twenty pounds would be paid to her, and that she would be sent similar amounts from time to time. After recovering from the initial shock of his wife and family getting rich through his going to fight for the white man, Nnaife wanted to know how often this payment would be made. He was informed that it would be about two to four times a year. They were assured that they would not be serving any longer than one year, since the enemy was on the point of being annihilated. More importantly, they were told, when they returned they would all be promoted in their places of work. Nnaife, for example, would move into the workshop and be apprenticed to a trade, on a higher income.

After all these promises, the men started to think very carefully. This was a chance to pull their families out of the kind of life they had been living; it had never occurred to them before that this

was poverty. Why, did not most people live the same way? Anyway, going into the army was bound to raise the standard of living of all of them. Nnaife reckoned that through his taking the plunge his sons Oshia and Adim would be well educated. So also would his brother's three sons at home in Ibuza benefit. Nnaife made up his mind that he must risk it. They were given pen and paper to write to their dependents telling them the best way to spend the money, and since many of the men could not write this was done for them by black officers who had been employed for the purpose.

Nnaife later saw Ibekwe with his head shaved, and wearing a new uniform. He told Nnaife that he had asked his wife (he only had one) to go home to their village and wait for him there. His parents would take charge of his income. His children were very young and would not be starting school until their father returned. After all, they were going to be away for only a year. Nnaife agreed that Ibekwe had made the right decision.

Nnaife himself would rather Nnu Ego stayed in Lagos and continued with her trade and looking after the household as best she could. He said she must send two pounds to Ibuza to pay the year's school fees for the senior Owulum's sons at the Catholic school there; the fees were four shillings a term so that would be sufficient. She should follow the same procedure when she received the next payment, but he cautioned her to regard each payment as the last she would ever get; he did not know where they were going, and he did not know whether he would come back alive. Nnu Ego should give five pounds to her co-wife Adaku for her to use to start a trade. The balance of the money they should use to feed their

children and pay the rent. Nnu Ego should see to it that Oshia's and Adim's school fees were paid on time.

He convinced himself that he was doing the right thing. He had no choice, anyway. As a grass-cutter, his income had only been five pounds a month. He had given his wives three pounds of it for food, sent ten shillings to his relatives back home, and paid ten shillings towards his esusu, a kind of savings among friends whereby each member of the group collected contributions in turn. Whatever was left Nnaife spent on himself. Things were cheap in those days; several men could get drunk on a keg of palm wine costing just six pence. Oshia and his brother accounted for eight shillings every three months at school. So on the whole they had been quite satisfied with his small income, until this upheaval. He was quite sure that his wife Nnu Ego would be able to manage.

The following morning Nnu Ego and Adaku were woken by Ubani. He looked sad and Nnu Ego was certain that something terrible had happened.

"Is Nnaife dead?" she asked, steeling herself for the worst.

"No, he is not dead. He is alive, only they have forced him to join the army."

"The army!" the two women echoed, not believing what they heard.

"How can they force a person to join the army?" was Nnu Ego's incredulous question. "He is a grass-cutter. Oh, my God, what can we do, Ubani? For me to be married to a soldier, a plunderer and killer of children...Ah, Ubani, can't we do anything?"

Adaku, shocked, began wailing and shouting. "I don't know if death isn't better than this! Poor Nnaife, why him, why him?"

"There is nothing we can do. The British own us, just like God does, and just like God they are free to

take any of us when they wish." In those days things were such that Nigerians had no voice. No paper would report what had taken place; even if it were reported, how many of those affected could read, and how many could afford to buy a newspaper?

From The Joys of Motherhood, published by George Braziller, Inc. 1979.

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Questions:

1. This is World War II seen from the eyes of the Africans. List the differences between their perspective of the war and those of your parents or grandparents. You might interview them to find out how they were affected by the war.
2. List three reasons why government work was appealing to Nnaife.
3. To some of the men, the prospect of saved money seemed worth this forced recruitment. How did the women view this turn of events?
4. In this passage, what evidence suggests that the British used the different peoples they colonized to run the colonies?

THE UMUOFIA PROGRESSIVE UNION
Chinua Achebe, No Longer At Ease

Background

Obi, the grandson of Okonkwo, hero of Things Fall Apart, has been chosen by his village, Umuofia, to be educated abroad. The village needs someone to represent them in the "modern" world, and Obi was one of the brightest of his age group. Even though he has followed a somewhat erratic course in London, now that he has returned the village expects him to get a good government job, a good salary and, above all, help others from Umuofia. Village groups, like these Igbos far from home in the big multi-ethnic city of Lagos, typically form self-help associations. Collectively they can offer each other credit, help in making contacts and give advice. These associations also serve as a way to reinforce rural and ethnic values in the city. Vocabulary word found in the glossary: mineral.

The President, in due course, looked at his pocket watch and announced that it was time to declare the meeting open. Everybody stood up and he said a short prayer. Then he presented three kola nuts to the meeting. The oldest man present broke one of them, saying another kind of prayer while he did it. "He that brings kola nuts brings life," he said. "We do not seek to hurt any man, but if any man seeks to hurt us may he break his neck." The congregation answered Amen. "We are strangers in this land. If good comes to it may we have our share." Amen. "But if bad comes let it go to the owners of the land who know what gods should be appeased." Amen. "Many towns have four or five or even ten of their sons in European posts in this city. Umuofia has only one. And now our enemies say that even that one is too many for us. But our ancestors will not agree to such a thing." Amen. "An only palm-fruit does not get lost in the fire." Amen.

Obi Okonkwo was indeed an only palm-fruit. His full name was Obiajulu--"the mind at last is at rest"--the mind being his father's

of course, who, his wife having borne him four daughters before Obi, was naturally becoming a little anxious. Being a Christian convert--in fact a catechist--he could not marry a second wife. But he was not the kind of man who carried his sorrow on his face. In particular, he would not let the heathen know that he was unhappy. He had called his fourth daughter Nwanyidinma--a girl is also good." But his voice did not carry conviction.

The old man who broke the kola nuts in Lagos and called Obi Okonkwo an only palm-fruit was not, however, thinking of Okonkwo's family. He was thinking of the ancient and warlike village of Umuofia. Six or seven years ago Umuofians abroad had formed their Union with the aim of collecting money to send some of their brighter young men to study in England. They taxed themselves mercilessly. The first scholarship under this scheme was awarded to Obi Okonkwo five years ago, almost to the day. Although they called it a scholarship it was to be repaid. In Obi's case it was worth eight hundred pounds, to be repaid within four years of his return.

They wanted him to read law so that when he returned he would handle all their land cases against their neighbors. But when he got to England to read English; his self-will was not new. The Union was angry but in the end they left him alone. Although he would not be a lawyer, he would get a "European post" in the civil service.

The selection of the first candidate had not presented any difficulty to the Union. Obi was an obvious choice. At the age of twelve or thirteen he had passed his Standard Six examination at the top of the whole province. Then he had won a scholarship to one of the best secondary schools in Eastern Nigeria. At the end of five years he passed the Cambridge School Certificate with distinction in all eight subjects. He was in fact a village celebrity, and his name was regularly invoked at the mission school where he had once been a pupil...

If Obi had returned by mail boat, the Umuofia Progressive Union (Lagos Branch) would have given him a royal welcome at the harbor. Anyhow, it was decided at their meeting that a big reception should be arranged to which press reporters and photographers should be invited. An invitation was also sent to the Nigerian Broadcasting Service to cover the occasion and to record the Umuofia Ladies' Vocal Orchestra, which had been learning a number of new songs.

The reception took place on Saturday afternoon at 4 p.m. on Moloney Street, where the President had two rooms.

Everybody was properly dressed in aghada or European suit except the guest of honor, who appeared in his shirtsleeves because of the heat. That was Obi's mistake Number One.

Everybody expected a young man from England to be impressively turned out.

After prayers the Secretary of the Union read the Welcome Address. The rose, cleared his throat, and began to intone from an enormous sheet of paper.

"Welcome Address presented to Michael Obi Okonkwo, B.A. (Hons), London, by the officers and members of the Umuofia Progressive Union on the occasion of his return from the United Kingdom in quest of the Golden Fleece.

"Sir, we the officers and members of the above-named Union present with humility and gratitude this token of our appreciation of your unprecedented academic brilliance..."

He spoke of the great honor Obi had brought to the ancient town of Umuofia, which could now join the comity of other towns in their march towards political irredentism, social equality, and economic emancipation.

"The importance of having one of our sons in the vanguard of this march of progress is nothing short of axiomatic. Our people have a saying, 'Ours is ours, but mine is mine.' Every town and village struggles at this momentous epoch in our political evolution to possess that of which it can say: 'This is mine.' We are happy that today we have such an invaluable possession in the person of our illustrious son and guest of honor."

He traced the history of the Umuofia Scholarship Scheme, which had made it possible for Obi to study overseas, and called it an investment which must yield heavy dividends. He then referred (quite

obliquely, of course) to the arrangement whereby the beneficiary from this scheme was expected to repay his debt over four years so that "an endless stream of students will be enabled to drink deep at the Pierian Spring of knowledge."

Needless to say, this address was repeatedly interrupted by cheers and the clapping of hands. What a sharp young man their secretary was, all said. He deserved to go to England himself. He wrote the kind of English they admired if not understood: the kind that filled the mouth, like the proverbial dry meat.

Obi's English, on the other hand, was most unimpressive. He spoke "is" and "was." He told them about the value of education. "Education for service, not for white-collar jobs and comfortable salaries. With our great country on the threshold of independence, we need men who are prepared to reserve her well and truly."

When he sat down the audience clapped from politeness. Mistake Number Two.

Cold beer, minerals, palm-wine, and

biscuits were then served, and the women began to sing about Umuofia and about Obi Okonkwo nwa jelu oyibo - Obi who had been to the land of the whites. The refrain said over and over again that the power of the leopard resided in its claws.

"Have they given you a job yet?" the chairman asked Obi over the music. In Nigeria the government was "they." It had nothing to do with you or me, it was an alien institution and people's business was to get as much from it as they could without getting into trouble.

"Not yet. I'm attending an interview on Monday."

"Of course those of you who know book will not have any difficulty," said the Vice-President on Obi's left. "Otherwise I would have suggested seeing some of the men beforehand."

"It would not be necessary," said the President, "since they would be mostly white men."

"You think white men don't eat bribe? Come to our department. They eat more than black men nowadays."

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Questions:

1. What does the term "eating bribe" mean?
2. What is the value of a university education to a Nigerian?
3. Why did the people from the village of Umuofia form these organizations?
4. The Umuofians are people living far from their village in a big city where a different language and lifestyle prevail. Can you think of groups who immigrated to America who used similar survival tactics?

NIGERIA AT THE CROSSROADS:
INDEPENDENCE AND CONTEMPORARY ISSUES
TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS

- I. Assign or read from Background Essay on Nigeria after Independence.
- II. Suggestions for activities to tie the readings together:
 - A. Pretend to write a novel which will be read throughout the world. In groups decide what themes, trends, characteristics about the U.S. to include in the novel.
 - B. List issues of economic development of primary concern to contemporary Nigerians. How do they compare/contrast with economic issues in the U.S.?
 - C. Survey U.S. media (magazines, records, videos, T.V., films) for depiction of attitudes toward men and women. How close does this attitude come to the reality of the roles of men and women?
 - D. What does a man have to do in urban Nigeria to be successful? A woman?
- III. Assign Readings. Optionally have students take parts and read them aloud.
- IV. CONTEMPORARY POEMS:

These poems may be assigned to those who prefer poetry over prose. They reflect many of the concerns expressed in the readings. Questions follow the poetry section.

NIGERIA AT THE CROSSROADS

Independence and Contemporary Issues

Nigerians inherited a number of problems when they achieved self-government in October, 1960. The country had been factionalized into three competing groups -- primarily Hausa-Fulani in the north, Yoruba in the southwest, and Igbo in the southeast. Until as late as 1947 the north and south were, in effect, administered as separate colonies. Beyond this, there were many other ethnic groups (there are around 100 languages in Nigeria) and each feared domination by the others. The new Constitution granted substantial power to the three main regions to prevent a domination by one group controlling the central government. This tended to reinforce sectionalism.

In its colonial role Britain had created an economy based largely on the exportation of raw materials and importation of manufactured goods, an economy that did little to tie the nation together. There were virtually no primary or secondary industries in Nigeria to provide goods, and a heavy dependence on manufactured products from America and Britain remained.

Throughout their history Nigerians had been trained to participate in the colonial system. Yet, they had to operate at lower level positions and never received the training needed for the top ranks. Their education usually was British or American and they brought that frame of reference to their decisions. The colonial legacy had offered no guides on how a democracy should work in Nigeria. Moreover, the needs of the average Nigerian had not been considered during the colonial period and the task of "nigerianizing" the country at every level was, and still remains, an enormous challenge.

Politically, Nigeria in its first twenty four years of independence has undergone major upheavals. The first civilian rule was overthrown by the military, which was itself overthrown in November, 1966. There was regional competition over the allocation of funds and over appointments and between ethnic groups. Things reached dangerous levels when Igbo civilian workers in the north were killed in a series of riots. The survivors fled to their homes in the east. This conflict erupted into a civil war in 1967. The Eastern, Igbo Region, seceded and called the new state Biafra. In the ensuing struggle, millions of people died through both warfare and starvation. A weak and decimated Igbo population finally surrendered in January 1970. Although there was little retaliation against the Igbo by the rest of the nation, some Igbos feel that their needs even now receive the lowest priority in the concerns of the nation.

Shortly after the Civil War, oil was developed and became a major factor in the Nigerian economy. Ambitious development plans followed. Corruption, inefficiency and the usurption of extraordinary powers by some in the military, a tradition first established in Nigeria by the British, brought this leadership to its downfall in 1975. General Murtala Mohammed then took power and immediately undertook major reforms. He purged the civil service, installed a new government nationalized British petroleum, and promised a return to civilian rule by 1979. His plans were cut short when he was assassinated in February, 1976.

The first civilian elections since the coup of 1966 occurred in 1979 and the regime of President Shehu Shagari began. Corruption in the form of draining off monies into the pockets of the elite and in rigging elections disenchanted Nigerians again. The tendency of politicians has been to offer all sorts of promises to build a mass following to win elections. Then they abandon their electorates and devote themselves to their own businesses. "Big Men," men of power, men who go after naira, (the national currency) have flaunted their wealth and assumed privileges at the expense of others. Nigeria, seemingly flush with the sudden wealth from oil has also been weakened by businessmen and foreign investors who encouraged a type of development which was inappropriate for Nigeria's level of technology.

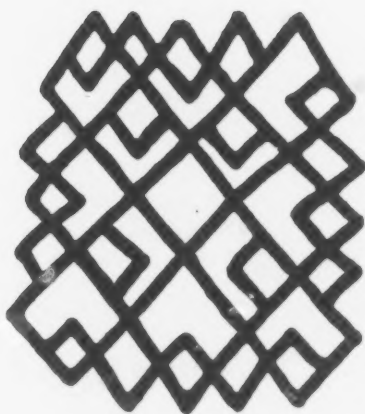
The continuing problems of leadership were addressed by Chinua Achebe, through a series of newspaper articles, in 1983. Now contained in a book called The Trouble With Nigeria, he called upon the educated elite to confront their corrupt leadership. He said that the inability of those in power, business and government to direct the country responsibly had created a climate of indiscipline. He cited, among other examples, the loss by the Federal Government of N500 million every month as salaries to non-existent workers. Achebe said that in 1983 it was estimated that as much as 60% of the wealth of the nation was regularly consumed by corruption. Achebe also lamented the continuing competition between ethnic groups, the enormous gap between highest and lowest paid in society and, above all, the disregard for the majority of citizens who are silent, and therefore "invisible." "They don't appear on front pages; they do not initiate industrial actions. They drink bad water and suffer from all kinds of preventable diseases."

When Major General Mohammed Buhari assumed control on December 31, 1983, the country as a whole was relieved. Now there is a real effort to redefine development and to make sure the needs of the country and ordinary citizen are put first. The public supports the national campaign to curb abuses. The War Against Indiscipline (WAI), is advertised everywhere -- on billboards, on T.V., through lapel buttons. One may hear Nigerians in a line exhort those who push to the front to queue up and obey the WAI.

Nigeria is a developing country. It has enormous potential, but the standard of living for the vast majority is low. Even though three-fourths of the population is to be found on farms, modern cities still draw people in from the countryside. Since the towns have always received the economic priorities, life in the villages has remained hard. City life appeals to those stuck in this life. Urban relatives coming home to visit appear well off, well dressed and interesting. They also bring the idea that anyone can get ahead if they have money. Everything can be bought; everything has a price. Urban values have become equated with the politics of corruption.

Since the 1940's African cities have grown enormously, some trebling their population in less than a decade. But few services have been provided for common people and shanties with bad sanitation are numerous. In a city like Lagos, the streets are busy with traffic and small businesses thrive. The basic services are problematic; electricity may or may not work, plumbing may or may not get fixed. Nigerians do not like these problems, yet they do not lose sleep over them. They are working to overcome them. Education is valued highly and attempts to offer free universal education have produced an influx of people ready to learn. There is a creative spirit in the arts,

literature and song. Newspapers flourish and Nigerians make sure they know what is going on. Although it is clear that women find it harder than men to be educated and to move into the modern economy, they have continued to pressure for their rights. Organizations such as Women In Nigeria (WIN), which is bringing women's problems into the public arena, are growing. Both women and men are trying to incorporate the finest the modern world has to offer with those traditions which may best enrich their lives.



NAIRA POWER
Buchi Emecheta, Naira Power

Background

The naira is the Nigerian monetary unit, just as the dollar is in the U.S. Lagos, a city of over 30 million, faces problems that are found in many African cities which grew rapidly in the last decades. Vocabulary word found in the glossary: Festac.

One of the civil laws in Lagos states that only even-numbered cars should run on the roads on certain days, and on other days, only odd-numbered vehicles. Despite this unusual measure the traffic problem remains far from solved. In fact, the law has aggravated the situation. Many people, including those who cannot afford it, go round buying and maintaining two cars. For how else can they get to their work, in a place where the public transport is not yet sufficiently developed? So, my brother, with his third wife Amina, had to buy a second car even though the six of them had to share two bedrooms. Well, they looked as if they could afford it. But woe betide anyone who suggested that the second car was bought for work. My brother would snap and say importantly, "I bought the second car for Amina."

Amina soon learned how to drive and made use of this small second car on days that she could get hold of it. Today we were lucky and the car was available. In order to avoid the traffic hold-up, we left a little after ten o'clock in the morning, in the hope that the rush hour to places of work would be over. But Lagos would not be Lagos if the roads were clear, even at this time of the morning. We progressed smoothly for the first five minutes or so, then we came to the junction road leading from the Festac Estate to the main highway.

There Amina smiled and said, "Now we come to Wasimini, the place of rest."

"You mean we are going to stay here very long?"

"I was only joking," she corrected. "We won't be staying here all that long."

I was tempted to ask exactly how long that would be but refrained for fear of hearing the worst. I know that when my houseboy on campus says "Wait small, madam," it could be hours, or even days. And it is bad manners to show signs of impatience, a fault common to people who have just returned from abroad, locally known as "show-off been-tos." Nonetheless, I had to ask, "But was not the reason for leaving the house this late to avoid this bottleneck?"

Amina sensed my impatience and smiled widely. Her round eyes danced in unison with her round cheeks. Her pale complexion glowed this morning as if in reflection of the cool morning air. I liked her hairdo, which must have cost a packet: it was elaborately woven like a basket turned upside down. Maybe she knew or suspected that I was admiring her, I could not be sure. But this I had noticed, that whenever my brother Nurudeen was not around, she became bubblier, even happier, and certainly much

more confident. Personally, I believed that she had a reason to be happy. My brother's other wives did not live with them, Amina very often had a car at her disposal, even though she did no outside job. She would be the first person to tell you how lucky she was that she did no outside job. And if you said to her, "But look Amina, you do wake up at five every morning and work on this and that till twelve at night..." she would tell you, without any hesitation, that housework is no work, and is only a woman's job. So how could a woman like me go round and start telling her that housework is a hell of a job and an important one at that? As I said earlier, I had to make it my duty not to interfere, otherwise she could turn round and say to me, "Auntie, why don't you mind your own business? Don't you know that you have stayed in England for so long that you no longer know what our people do and what they don't do?"

As it was, Amina simply announced patiently, "If we had left home earlier, Auntie, we would have been here for at least an hour. But as it is, we will not be here for more than forty minutes. I promise."

"Charming! Glorious ten minutes saved," I replied, peeping at my watch at the same time.

I looked down out of the window of the car only to discover that we were in the middle of a mini-lake. Had the engineer forgotten to include a drainage system on the main road, I wondered? I looked further down, only to see a big open drain, static, its sides coated a sickly green. The water was not moving at all. Amina guessed my thoughts and remarked casually, "You see Auntie, the market people throw all their rubbish in this gutter so the water is trapped and the roads become flooded."

"But when I was little, there used to be some men who came weekly to collect rubbish. Are they all dead now, and if so, why can't we employ more people to collect rubbish?" I asked.

"You must realise, Auntie, that collecting rubbish is not a very popular occupation. It is dirty, degrading and on top of everything else, it has little naira power."

I laughed. "So, Amina, you think everything in this world can be judged by its naira power? Don't people do things just for the love of it?"

Amina reflected for a moment, trying to puzzle out the things people do just for the love of it. Then aloud she said, "If you haven't got naira power here, Auntie, you are lost. Money can buy you everything, even justice. Everything. If clearing rubbish were well paid, some people would not mind doing it. Money speaks here, Auntie, nothing else."

"Money does not buy everything," I declared flatly and uncompromisingly.

Amina smiled, showing those childish looking teeth, and said, as if I needed reminding, "Oh Auntie, you have stayed too long in England. This is Nigeria, you know."

I have heard this argument for so long now that I have stopped making any reply to it. Our lack of enthusiasm for work that relates to the public is well-known. For example, a Nigerian businessman will work tirelessly night and day in his own private business but, once that same person is employed in any kind of public work, he will go slack, and say "Na government job, ino de finish." Intellectuals have told me heatedly that it is unfair

to compare Nigeria with other nations, and that this place being Nigeria, things are done this way, and cannot be changed. So people always end up saying, without any shame, "This is Nigeria, bear with us."

I now looked at my sister-in-law and followed her smiling example. There was no point in losing my temper. I could not get out of the car or wade down to the market; I simply had to simmer down.

At last we started to inch our way forward amidst the tangled web of traffic and the unruly damfoes. These yellow mini-buses, breakers of all the traffic rules in the book, could go the wrong way when ever the mood took them; they could cut in front of you, oh, they could do anything. They were the terrors of the roads, next to the taxi drivers.

Soon we neared the market and my sister-in-law brought out two pairs

of gum boots. The mud around here had completely covered up the tarred roads. We put on the boots and waited, searching in vain for ways to escape from the traffic trap and park the car somewhere.

In desperation, Amina had to say, "Oh, it would have been quicker if we'd walked."

"If we had waded, you mean. How can one walk in a place like this? There are too many cars, motorcycles, cycles, open gutters and wandering people. No, walking in this part of the country is out of the question. You'll get killed."

She sighed. "But only ten years ago, we could walk the streets of Lagos."

"Now you are beginning to sound like me. Ten, fifteen years ago, were years before the oil boom, before Nigeria became rich. Now she is rich, we are all condemned to choke in our wealth."

Questions:

1. If you were to write about the hazards of city life in the U.S., what would you include? What specific problems do the citizens of Lagos face?
2. Conjecture about how an oil rich nation like Nigeria has so many troubles providing the basic services for its cities.
3. What are your opinions of government work (civil service)? Are there any American complaints similar to "Na government job, ino de finish."? (It is government work; it can never come to an end.)

A WOMAN'S SURVIVAL ARMOUR
Buchi Emecheta, The Double Yoke, Chapter Ten

Background

This reading focuses on the problems facing educated women in African nations. Women, more than men, are expected to maintain the traditional values and therefore to change the least. At the same time the status of being educated and the reality of getting a better job make getting a degree an important goal. "Modern" women, however, are considered too free. Partly because they move in an atmosphere beyond the traditional control of the family, they are considered fair game for male advances. Also, some women have used their bodies to "get ahead," a practice unheard of in traditional village life.

Both Nko and her boyfriend Ete are caught between the burden of community expectations and the burden of individual expectations. Although they have fallen in love and freely chosen each other, they are finding out that marriage still is not a simple act between two people. And Ete, who at the beginning of the novel claims "he is still a Nigerian male and has no wish to change," finds he must make the greatest adjustments. Vocabulary word found in the glossary: Unical.

Nothing could beat the excitement and hope with which girls like Nko looked at university life. It was one thing to go to secondary school and get good certificates, but to be really admitted into one of the highest institutions of the land, and with the hope of getting a degree at the end of it, was something else. She had regarded herself as an extremely lucky girl. She would make the best of it. She would work hard at her studies and she was going to get not just a degree, but a good one. Then she would marry Ete Kamba and they would have about six children. They were not going to lack anything because she would be working and Ete Kamba would be working as well. Theirs was going to be a good marriage, a marriage in which the two of them would complement each other.

One fly in the ointment was the new self she was beginning to acquire. Previously she would let Ete Kamba

have his own way with where they went together and with whatever they were going to do. But now, she was beginning to ask questions, to ask him to give her his reasons for some of his actions. She hated herself after such questioning; she knew that Ete Kamba did not like it, and many a time she would promise herself never to do it again. "For what is a woman if after all her degrees and what have you, she is not married?" She had asked herself often. Anyway, she had no problem on that score; her childhood sweetheart was still faithful to her. So she had to be very careful not to lose him.

She had confided in her mother about it. "Mother, look at all the wahala he raised about the university forms the other day. He wanted to know how I managed to get the forms before any other person. I had to tell him that I needed the forms, and then that I got them, so what did it matter how? But he was still angry..."

Her mother smiled. She picked up Nko's young, smooth and still delicate hand in her rough hard one and said, "And you told him that Professor Elder Ikot got them for you?"

"But mother, he got them for me. You remember, Mother, that father was very ill and I had to be with him in the hospital, and for one reason or the other the forms were delayed, so he got them for me. Why should that annoy Ete Kamba, why, mother? I was speaking the truth, was I not, mother?"

"Nko, Nko, a few years ago, when Ete Kamba got his admission and you were not even sure you would be finishing secondary school to say nothing of going to a university, would you have told him the whole truth? Would you have had the courage to tell him that Professor Ikot got those forms for you? You knew he would be angry. If you didn't know that, then my daughter, you were still not a woman. But I'm sure you know now."

"Mother, Professor Ikot is a spiritual leader!"

"And he is a man."

Nko remembered the incident on the night Ete Kamba loved her by the wall. She looked at her mother. Mother and child suddenly found themselves plunged into that kind of silence that is so loudly communicative. Unwittingly, Nko's arms circled round her mother's neck and she cried with near anguish. "Oh, mother, I want to have both worlds, I want to be an academician and I want to be a quiet nice and obedient wife, the type you all want me to be. I want the two, mother. Oh please, mother, help me. I know I can be of more use to you and my brothers if I had these two worlds."

"I know, Nko, I know. You know sometimes I think you modern girls

are not so lucky. When I was your age, all I was thinking of was how to go to the fattening room and make myself round and beautiful for your father. I did not have to sit up night after night with no sleep; I did not have to eat just oranges to keep myself thin; I did not even have to look for a husband. Now you have this new thing, this mad education for women and yet still, you want to have everything we had...it is going to be difficult. We had to keep quiet, because we did not know many of the things our men knew. You may call us ignorant, but we were happy and contented in our ignorance." Nko's mother sighed and then went on in a much more confident voice, "I am sure Jesus Christ who said that all those who carry heavy yokes should come to Him, will help you. I think you should go to Him in prayer. Because daughter, you know what you are under, you are under a double yoke. So you need a stronger shoulder with which to carry it. I did not carry this, so how can I help, eh? I, who like you is bewildered by it all."

Nko had stood up and made as if to go to the door, then asked. "Mother, suppose I refuse to take the university place given me now, do you think that will make me happier?"

"I don't know, daughter. You have been to see your man friend at that place. You have seen that people who went to such places came out better equipped financially to cope with this expensive country. You have also seen that without money no one is respected here anymore. And you know that you can get all these things by going there. You have heard me shout with sheer joy on your admission to Unical, and you have seen my friends congratulate me on the one hand, and then envy me on the other hand, all for having such a brilliant daughter."

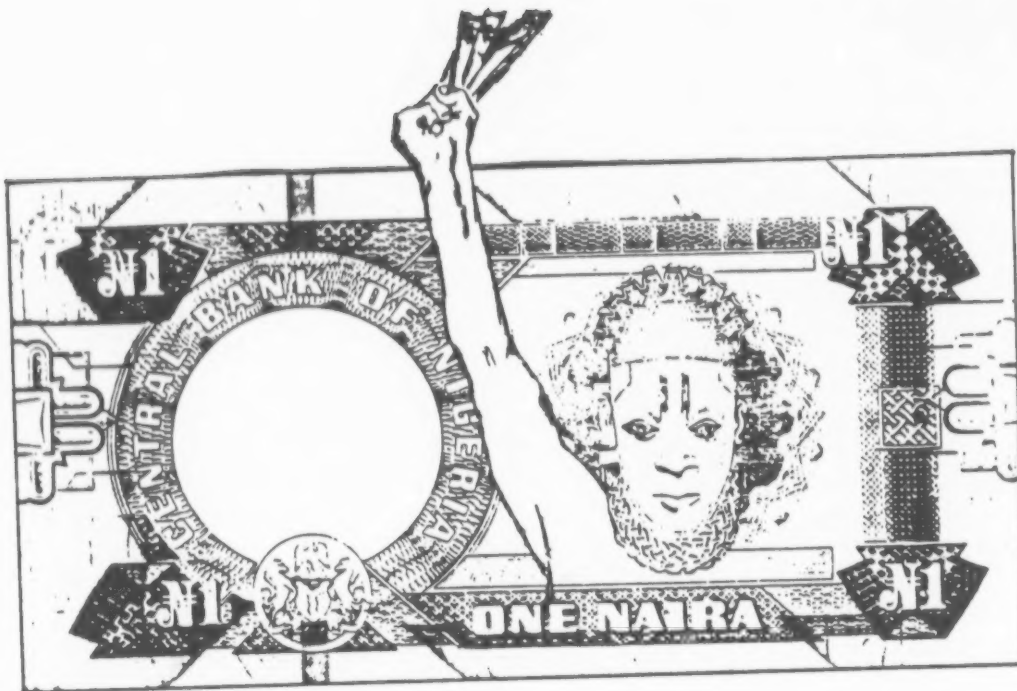
Will you ever forgive yourself if you did not take the chance? And suppose at the end of it all, Ete Kamba became a really big man, who wanted an educated wife to match, where do you think you will be then? You have to have both, my daughter to get that inner fulfillment you want. How you are going to go about having that fulfillment

is entirely up to you. Personally, I will say yes, take the chance. You are not the only girl faced with such situation. When you get there, you'll see how other girls cope. You will even be better off, because I will never stop praying for you. You should not forget your Saviour either."

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Questions:

1. Compare this reading with "A Mother's Early Life" from the readings on traditional society. What prerequisites for marriage have changed? Which seem to remain?
2. What double yokes do American women carry? Are there similarities to Nko's problems? Differences?
3. At the end of the novel, Ete, too, says he is under a double yoke. What do you think is his double yoke?



THE REJECTED BRIBE
Chinua Achebe, No Longer At Ease

Background

People who achieve influential positions are expected to help others. This concept is traditional -- everyone in the group helps each other, and people of influence should be used. Those educated with the Western view of individual achievement based on individual skills find themselves caught between adherence to this tenet and the requirement to fulfill group obligations. Further, people in power are pressured to maintain a degree of material wealth as a symbol of their position. This reading describes these pressures while illustrating the prevalence of bribery.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The telephone rang and Miss Tomlinson answered it.

"Mr. Okonkwo? Right. Hold on for him. For you, Mr. Okonkwo."

Obi's telephone was in parallel with hers. He thought it was Clara, but it was only the receptionist downstairs.

"A gentlemen? Send him up, please. He want speak to me there? All right, I de come down. Now now."

The gentleman was in a three-piece suit and carried a rolled umbrella. Obviously a new arrival from England.

"Good morning. My name is Okonkwo."

"Mark is mine. How do you do?"

They shook hands.

"I've come to consult you about something - semiofficial and semiprivate."

"Let's go up to my office, shall we?"

"Thank you very much."

Obi led the way.

"You have just come back to Nigeria?" he asked as they mounted the stairs.

"I've been back now six months."

"I see." He opened the door.

"After you."

Mr. Mark stepped in, and then pulled up suddenly as if he had seen a snake across his path. But he recovered quickly enough and walked in.

"Good morning," he said to Miss Tomlinson, all smiles. Obi dragged another chair to his table and Mr. Mark sat down.

"And what can I do for you?"

To his amazement Mr. Mark replied in Ibo:

"If you don't mind, shall we talk in Ibo? I didn't know you had a European here."

"Just as you like. Actually I

didn't think you were Ibo. What is your problem?" He tried to sound casual.

"Well, it is like this. I have a sister who has just passed her School Certificate in Grade One. She wants to apply for a Federal Scholarship to study in England."

Although he spoke in Ibo, there were some words that he had to say in English. Words like school certificate and scholarship. He lowered his voice to a whisper when he came to them.

"You want application forms?" asked Obi.

"No, no, no. I have got those. But it is like this. I was told that you are the secretary of the Scholarship Commission and I thought I should see you. We are both Ibos and I cannot hide anything from you. It is all very well sending in forms, but you know what our country is. Unless you see people..."

"In this case it is not necessary to see anybody. The only..."

"I was actually thinking of coming round to your house, but the man who told me about you did not know where you lived."

"I'm sorry Mr. Mark, but I really don't understand what you are driving at." He said this in English, much to Mr. Mark's consternation. Miss Tomlinson pricked up her ears like a dog that is not quite sure whether someone has mentioned bones.

"I'm sorry--er--Mr. Okonkwo. But don't get me wrong. I know this is the wrong place to--er..."

"I don't think there is any point in continuing this discussion," Obi said again in English. "If you

don't mind, I'm rather busy." He rose to his feet. Mr. Mark also rose, muttered a few apologies, and made for the door...

After his encounter with Mr. Mark he did feel like a tiger. He had won his first battle hands-down. Everyone said it was impossible to win. They said a man expects you to accept "kola" from him for services rendered, and until you do, his mind is never at rest. He feels like the inexperienced kit that carried away a duckling and was ordered by its mother to return it because the duck had said nothing, made no noise, just walked away. "There is some grave danger in that kind of silence. Go and get a chick. We know the hen. She shouts and curses, and the matter ends there." A man to whom you do a favor will not understand if you say nothing, make no noise, just walk away. You may cause more trouble by refusing a bribe than by accepting it. Had not a Minister of State said, albeit in an un-

guarded, alcoholic moment, that the trouble was not in receiving bribes, but in failing to do the thing for which the bribe was given? And if you refuse, how do you know that a "brother" or a "friend" is not receiving on your behalf, having told everyone that he is your agent? Stuff and nonsense! It was easy to keep one's hands clean. It required no more than the ability to say: "I'm sorry, Mr. So-and-so, but I cannot continue this discussion. Good morning." One should not, of course, be unduly arrogant. After all, the temptation was not really overwhelming. But in all modesty one could not say it had been nonexistent. Obi was finding it more and more impossible to live on what was left of his forty-seven pounds ten after he had paid twenty to the Umuofia Progressive Union and sent ten to his parents. Even now he had no idea where John's school fees for next term would come from. No, one could not say he had no need of money.

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Questions:

1. Interpret the phrase "a man expects you to accept 'kola' from him for services rendered." Compare this with the kola ceremony described in the readings on traditional life.
2. Why did Mr. Mark assume that talking to Obi in their common language would facilitate the transaction?
3. How does the author let you know that Obi eventually may accept a bribe?

THE NEW PARTY
Chinua Achebe, Man of the People, Chapter Eight

Background

Nation building is a difficult process. As the country seeks to establish viable political structures, political parties come and go. This reading reflects the with the political process of a group of young "intellectuals," with the political process. It also shows their continuing optimism as they attempt to take their part in the struggle to create a nation. A complete reading of the novel will tell you the full story of the vicissitudes of this new party. Vocabulary words found in the glossary include: Pidgin English and highlife.

That first night I not only heard of a new political party about to be born but got myself enrolled as a foundation member. Max and some of his friends having watched with deepening disillusion the use to which our hard-won freedom was being put by corrupt, mediocre politicians had decided to come together and launch the Common People's Convention.

There were eight young people in his room that evening. All but one were citizens of our country, mostly professional types. The only lady there was a very beautiful lawyer who, I learned afterwards, was engaged to Max whom she had first met at the London School of Economics. There was a trade-unionist, a doctor, another lawyer, a teacher and a newspaper columnist.

Max introduced me without any previous consultation as a "trust-worthy comrade who had only the other day had his girl-friend snatched from him by a minister who shall remain nameless."

Naturally I did not care for that kind of image or reputation. So I promptly intervened to point out that the woman in question was not

strictly speaking my girl-friend but a casual acquaintance whom both Chief Nanga and I knew.

"So it was Chief Nanga, yes?" said the European and everyone burst out laughing.

"Who else could it be?" said one of the others.

The white man was apparently from one of the Eastern Bloc countries. He did not neglect to stress to me in an aside that he was there only as a friend of Max's. He told me a lot of things quietly while the others were discussing some obscure details about the launching. I was as much interested in what he said as the way he said it. His English had an exotic quality occasionally, as when he said that it was good to see intellectuals like Max, myself and the rest coming out of their "tower of elephant tusk" into active politics. And he often punctuated whatever he was saying with "yes," spoken with the accent of a question.

I must say that I was immediately taken with the idea of the Common People's Convention. Apart from everything else it would add a second string to my bow when I came to deal with Nanga. But right now I was anxious not to appear to Max

and his friends as the easily impressed type. I suppose I wanted to erase whatever impression was left of Max's unfortunate if unintentional presentation of me as a kind of pitiable jellyfish. So I made what I intended to be a little spirited sceptical speech.

"It is very kind of you gentlemen and lady—I say gentlemen and lady advisedly because this happens to be Africa—it is very kind of you to accept me so readily. I wish to assure you all that your confidence will be fully justified. But without trying to put a cat among your pigeons I must say that I find it somewhat odd that a party call itself the Common People's Convention should be made up of only professional men and women..."

I was interrupted by many voices at once. But the rest gave way to Max.

"That is not entirely accurate, Odili. What you see here is only the vanguard, the planning stage. Once we are ready we shall draw in the worker, the farmer, the blacksmith, the carpenter..."

"And the unemployed, of course," said the young lady with that confidence of a beautiful woman who has brains as well which I find a little intimidating. "And I'd like to take our friend up on a purely historical point. The great revolutions of history were started by intellectuals, not the common people. Karl Marx was not a common man; he wasn't even a Russian."

The trade-unionist applauded the speech by clapping and shouting "Hear, hear." The rest made different kinds of appreciative noises.

"Well, well," I thought and gave up altogether my next idea of asking

how the thing was going to be financed.

"At the same time," said Max, acting the perfect chairman, "I can't say that I blame Odili for making that point. He's always been a stickler for thoroughness. Do you know the name we called him at school? Diligent." Everyone laughed.

"I should add that he was called Cool Max," I said. "He always played it cool."

"And still does," said the lady with a wink at him.

"I beg your pardon," protested Max playfully. "Anyhow, lady and gentlemen, or rather, gentlemen and lady, to borrow our friend's fine example..."

"Max!" protested the girl in mock outrage. "Well, I never!"

"I think to save all difficulty—yes? We should simply say comrades—yes?" suggested the European, laughing nervously which made me think he wasn't joking like the rest of us.

"Hear! hear!" said the trade-unionist.

"Yes," said Max coolly, "except that as I said several time before, I don't want anybody to say we are communists. We can't afford the label. It would simply finish us. Our opponents would point at us and say, 'Look at those crazy people who want to have everything in common including their wives,' and that would be the end of it. That's the plain fact."

"I don't know about that," said the trade-unionist. "I think our trouble in this country is that we are too nervous. We say we are neutral but as soon as we hear communist we begin de shad and piss

for trouser. Excuse me," he said to the lady and stopped the pidgin as suddenly as he had slid into it.

"The other day somebody asked me why did I go to Russia last January. I told him it was because if you look only in one direction your neck will become stiff..." We all laughed loud, especially the European.

"I know, Joe..." began Max, but Joe did not yield easily.

"No, excuse me, Max," he said, "I am serious. We are either independent in this country or we are not."

"We are not," said Max, and everyone laughed again, including Joe this time, all the heat apparently siphoned off him.

I was struck by Max's cool, sure touch. He was clearly in control of the situation. And he seemed to me to have just the right mixture of faith and down-to-earth practical common sense.

"We will not win the next election," he told me on another occasion. In itself it was a fairly obvious statement; but how many mushroom political parties had we seen spring up, prophesy a landslide victory for themselves and then shrivel up again. "What we must do is get something going," said Max, "however small, and wait for the blow-up. It's bound to come. I don't know how or when but it's got to come. You simply cannot have this stagnation and corruption going indefinitely."

"How do you propose getting the money?"

"We will get some," he smiled, enough to finance ordinary election expenses. We will leave mass bribing of the election to P.O.P and P.A.P. We will simply drop cats among the pigeons here and

there, stand aside and watch. I am right now assembling all the documentary evidence I can find on corruption in high places. Brother, it will make you weep."

"I am sure."

Because I had asked him jokingly as we were about to retire to bed if he still wrote poetry, Max had one and fished out lines he wrote seven years ago to the music of a famous highlife. He wrote it during the intoxicating months of high hope soon after Independence. Now he sang it like a dirge. And, believe me, tears welled up at the back of my eyes; tears for the dead, infant hope. You may call me sentimental if you like.

I have the poem, "Dance-offering to the Earth-Mother" right here before me as I write and could quote the whole of it; but it could never convey in print the tragic feeling I had that evening as Max sang it tapping his foot to the high life rhythm, and bringing back vividly the gaiety and high promise of seven years ago which now seemed more than seven lifetimes away!

I will return home to her -
many centuries I have a
wandered -

And I will make my offering at
the feet of my lovely
Mother;

I will rebuild her house, the
holy places they raped and
plundered,

And I will make it fine with
black wood, bronzes and
terra-cotta.

I read this last verse over and over again. Poor black mother! Waiting so long for her infant son to come of age and comfort her and repay her for the years of shame and neglect. And the son she has pinned so much hope on turning out to be a Chief Nanga.

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Questions:

1. What kind of (a) person (b) politician is Chief Nanga?
2. Why did this group feel the need to create a new party?
3. What are the different viewpoints within the group? Why do they feel Nigeria is still not independent?
4. What realities keep people from working for the government?
5. In the poem, who is the "lovely mother?" Who is the "they" who raped and plundered

CONTEMPORARY POETRY

CONFLICT

by Mabel Segun

Here we stand
infants overblown,
poised between two civilisations,
finding the balance irksome,
itching for something to happen,
to tip us one way or the other,
groping in the dark for a helping hand
and finding none.
I'm tired, O my God, I'm tired,
I'm tired of hanging in the middle way -
but where can I go?

REJOINDER

by John Ekwere

Now no more the palefaced strangers
With unhallowed feet
The heritage of our fathers profane;
Now no missioned benevolent despots
Bull-doze an unwilling race;
No more now the foreign hawks
On alien chickens prey -
But we on us!

ONCE UPON A TIME

by Gabriel Okara

Once upon a time, son,
they used to laugh with their hearts
and laugh with their eyes;
but now they only laugh with their teeth,
while their ice-block-cold eyes
search behind my shadow.

There was a time indeed
they used to shake hands with their hearts;
but that's gone, son.
Now they shake hands without hearts
while their left hands search
my empty pockets.

"Feel at home," "Come again,"
they say, and when I come
again and feel
at home, once, twice,
there will be no thrice-
for then I find doors shut on me.
So I have learned many things, son.
I have learned to wear many faces
like dresses-homeface,
officeface, streetface, hostface, cock-
tailface, with all their conforming smiles
like a fixed portrait smile.

And I have learned too
to laugh with only my teeth
and shake hands without my heart.

I have also learned to say, "Goodbye,"
when I mean "Goodriddance;"
to say "Glad to meet you,"
without being glad; and to say "It's been
nice talking to you," after being bored.

But believe me, son.
I want to be what I used to be
when I was like you. I want
to unlearn all these muting things.
Most of all, I want to relearn
how to laugh, for my laugh in the mirror
shows only my teeth like a snake's bare fangs!

So show me, son,
how to laugh; show me how
I used to laugh and smile
once upon a time when I was like you.

THE SPIRIT OF AFRICA

by Patrick Wilmot

the Spirit of Africa moves
in the tormented smiles
of black men bowing
before Europeans
in the blows of the black men struck
against their brothers
in the multitudes
of black faces moving forward
but without hope
seeking hope in cheap alcohol
seeking hope in religion
seeking hope in the music
of Leadbelly and the Mighty Sparrow
of Makeba and Fela Anikulapo-Kuti
seeking hope
in marriage
the home
the family
seeking hope outside the shut gates
of the sausage factory
owned by the Lebanese

POEMS FROM THE NEWSPAPERS

THE FAILURE OF SCIENCE

SCIENCE

Of your nobility, we doubt not
Of your application, of recent
We are suspicious
For you have changed

You have moved down
Deeper down into irrelevance
Your academic pursuit a hollow imagination
And your application
A deadly threat to our survival

Your continued progress
In the field of warfare
As in the field of production
Has raised more problems
Than can be solved

The fear of nuclear holocaust
The invasion of our privacy via the microchip
The loss of employment to robots
Have clothed us in uncertain ties
Holding us victims of our own efforts.

Of recent we have observed
A reckless diversion of our natural resources
Both Human and material
Into your world of no social relevance
You have truly failed us.

YUNUSA Z. YA'U
ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT
BAYERO UNIVERSITY
KANO

SECRETARY'S PRAYER

Help me to have the memory of an elephant,
And by some miracle, let me do all things at
once
Answer four telephones at the same time,
and type a letter "that must go today"
even though it won't be signed until tomorrow.

Give me the knowledge of a
University Professor with my
Junior Certificate of Standard
Education.

Let me know without being told,
where the boss is, what he is
doing, and when he will be back,
And help me to keep cool when
I am passed the buck so that
he won't look stupid.

And grant me the foresight not
to destroy, when I am told to,
records that will be asked for,
within a few days.

So Lord I shall be
very busy these days
If I should forget
Thee, do not Thou
forget me.

ROBERTA (BOBBY) AGOH.
44, EGBE ROAD S/GARI, KANO

WARNING

There seemed to be
An impassable mountain
Where the Sahara desert
Of hunger and famine,
Sickness and death
Were but a daily scene,
And then the coup
Arrived like a hasty gust of wind
And swept the dried leaves
Parched angrily by drought
Mercilessly whirled
By the sudden swoop of a whirlwind.
The coup finally came
Like rain which brings forth
Newborn lofty fruits
That enliven many a hopeless life
And create homely joys for many a soul.
But lo! Keep on watching
For that aura of soulful seeing
Is draining, draining, draining!
Keep on hoping for lovelier evenings
But be on guard for unforeseen things!

ROSE ATO MANALANG
GOVERNMENT COLLEGE, KATSINA,
KADUNA STATE

LAGOS

The complex marriage of complex opposite:
beautiful and ugly
ancient and modern
inviting and repelling
fast, yet so slow
team with the living
the dying
and the living dead
all sinking or swimming
in a whirring whirlpool
that gulps and gulps
Somehow
you love to think
you don't hate the place

NDUKWE.O.UCHE
April 1984

Questions:

1. These poems all deal with different aspects of contemporary African life. Can you list them?
2. Many refer to that fact that people are torn between two civilizations. What are the main features of both? What do the poets feel has been lost? Give examples from the poems.
3. Write a critical appraisal of one poem, referring to the theme, how it is presented and perhaps the most effective phrases.
4. Write a poem about your world - not about your personal problems or joys but about issues that effect society as a whole.

GLOSSARY

AGBALA: Oracle of the hills and caves served by a priestess; sometimes female, sometimes male.

ALA: The earth goddess, the great mother. The Igbo feel close to her.

ANI: Also the earth spirit. Worshipped throughout Iboland.

BENIN EMPIRE: Pre-colonial empire centered at Benin City in today's southern Nigeria, west of the Niger River. Early 17th century Benin was described as a great city.

BIG MAN: Important, wealthy man; powerful executive, village chief, military officer.

BITTER LEAF: A vegetable that is dried and then used in making a richly flavored soup or stew.

BRIDEPRICE: The brideprice consists of payments and presents given from the relatives of the bridegroom to those of the bride. It is not payment for a wife. Rather it is payment which strengthens the alliance between two families. Originally the materials collected for the brideprice were prestigious but were not monetary units. Now money is used and the brideprice has become more of a "purchase," particularly as some fathers see it as a way to get their investment in their daughter's education back. Government attempts to control brideprice amounts meet with varying results. Often the family giving the brideprice secretly adds to the officially proscribed figure.

BULL-ROARER: A thin slat of wood held by a cord at one end and swung around the head. It produces a moaning sound.

BUSH: Term used for rural areas generally, but used insultingly to refer to persons whose appearance or behavior is perceived as rural.

CALL-AND-RESPONSE: An important characteristic of much African music, call-and-response is the "conversation" between a solo and chorus. It is evident in drumming, singing, and other forms including African American gospel music.

CAMWOOD: A large shrub from which a red powder is made from the wood and used as a cosmetic, dye or medicine.

CASSAVA: Called manioc in America where it was first cultivated, cassava is a large tuber. Made into foo-foo, garri, and tapioca. Manihot esculenta.

CHI: Chi is one's personal god that directs the course of one's life. It becomes attached to an individual at birth. One's chi selects a person's length of time on earth and the things that will happen to her or him. Chi may be good or bad as one's personal chi may turn against an individual. One saying states, "A man does not challenge his chi to a wrestling match."

CHUKWU: The supreme deity. He is not seen as directly involved in human affairs.

C.M.S.: The Church Missionary Society. Founded in 1799 in England as an Anglican evangelical body to serve in Africa and eastern Asia. It is still active.

COCO YAM: Called taro in Asia where it was first cultivated, coco yam is a tuber. In the U.S. it is the base for poi. Colocasia esculenta.

DASH: Tip for services rendered; bribe for services desired.

DIBIA: These are people who have priestly functions such as the authority to heal or to divine. There are Dibia Associations which require costly ritual ceremonies to join.

EGWUGWU: Also known as mmo. These are ancestral spirits symbolized by mask wearing elders on special occasions. Since a close link is thought to exist between the living and the dead, spirits of the departed return in these mask wearing ceremonies.

EKWE: A drum with a carved head on one end. Can be struck to produce varying tones.

FESTAC: Festival held in Lagos in 1977 to celebrate black culture.

FOOFOO: This is a mushy, sticky carbohydrate base for meat, fish, or soup. Made from cassava or pounded yam. It is eaten with the fingers.

GARRI: Starch food made from cassava.

GERMANS: Germany had colonial interests east of contemporary Nigeria in Cameroon (Kamerun).

HARMATTAN: The prevailing wind from the Sahara, usually from early November to late January. It carries immense quantities of dust and lowers daytime temperatures.

HIGH LIFE: Dance music long popular in Africa.

IBO (see Igbo)

IGBO: Igbo is a language and the people who speak it in southeastern Nigeria. In the past it was spelled Ibo.

IKENGA: A statue used as a source of inspiration and to help its owner reach the supreme being. It is made out of wood and is fashioned to reflect the accomplishments of its owner. Some people have them today.

IKORO: A large drum fashioned out of a single piece of wood. Originally it was mainly drummed for war.

JIGIDA BEADS: These beads are worn at the waist by girls until their marriage ceremonies.

KOLA NUT: The kola tree originally comes from southern Nigeria. Its fruit, kola nut, is rich in caffeine and is commonly given to friends as a gift and token of respect. Coca-Cola contains flavoring extracted from kola nut. Cola acuminata.

LAPPA: Lengthy cloth wrapper; small children are carried in their mother's lappa on her back.

LOCUST: Form of grasshopper which travels in swarms. The swarms strip any vegetation in their paths.

LORRY: Truck.

MINERAL: Carbonated soft drink like Pepsi or Fanta; mineral water.

NAIRA: Nigeria's basic currency unit (N). It is subdivided into 100 kobo (k). The naira was introduced on 1 January 1973, replacing the Nigerian pound.

NDICHIE: The leading elders of the village.

NZU: White clay or chalk used ceremonially. A guest is offered chalk, with which he marks out his personal emblem on the floor. Titled men mark their big toes or face.

OBI: The compound or individual house.

OZO TITLE AND TITLE TAKING: Some Igbos value competition and seek prestige. One way to achieve this is to earn titles, which they believe they carry into the ancestral world. Titles are not inherited but they are earned, through good deeds, wealth or special skills. The Ozo title is taken by a man as soon as his wealth and prestige allow him this honor. The title gives him a voice in the village decisions.

OGBANJE: Ogbanje are children who die seemingly without cause during childhood and then keep returning to the same mother in the form of another child. The belief is that the process of death and rebirth will keep occurring unless the parents can break the cycle through intervention, charms, etc.

OSU: Osu is someone who has been dedicated, or whose ancestors have been dedicated, to a diety. The osu was given by an individual or an entire village to appease a god or goddess when a diviner claimed a certain diety demanded a human to end a period of bad luck. The osu was not killed or treated poorly, he in effect assumed the sins of the dedicator. Then the osu was disliked because he reminded the dedicator of something he did wrong. Also the osu was feared because of their association with the diety. It was important to keep the osu segregated from everyone else. Even when the osu or his descendants became well educated or wealthy or achieved influence among Westerners, generally they were looked down upon. The Osu status became legally abolished only in 1956.

OFO STAFF: The ofo staff is a symbol of ritual power and is carried by people of authority.

OGENE: Bell-shaped iron musical instrument struck with a stick.

PALM OIL/WINE: Palm oil and wine come from the sap of the oil or raffia palm tree; ferments quickly to make a sweet wine. Palm oil is used in cooking and is a good source of vitamin A. Oil palm, Elaeis guineensis; raffia palm, Raphia vinifera.

PIDGIN ENGLISH: The origins of West African Pidgin are obscure. It is widely used in Nigeria today, the time and place for its use depending on the persons involved (just as Igbo, Yoruba, Hausa, Standard English, or any of the other Nigerian languages might be used). Some common words: am, her, him, it; chop, food, eat; de, indicator of continuous actions, also be; na, is, was; it is; waa, exclamation, "wow"; wetin, what, which, that thing; wey, who, which, that.

PORTUGUESE: The Portuguese first began exploring the African Atlantic coast in the mid-15th century. By the late 15th century they were in contact with Benin. They had missionaries in Warri until the 17th century.

RAFFIA SKIRT: Ceremonial skirt made from raffia palm (see palm oil/wine).

UDU: Clay musical wind instrument.

UGANI: Time of food shortage.

ULI: Cosmetic liquid from crushed seeds. It makes a black mark permitting elaborate tatto-like decorations that last for days.

UNICAL: University of Calabar.

YAM: The true yam originally comes from West Africa. It is a very important part of the diet of many people who live in the forest zone. As the principle starch food, it is prepared in many ways, including foo-foo which tastes and looks like mashed potatoes. Americans often confuse the true yam of West Africa with the sweet potato "yam" popular in the U.S. The sweet potato yam was first cultivated on the American continent and is not related botanically to the West African yam, genus Dioscorea.

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AFRICA PROJECT/SPICE

CURRICULUM UNIT EVALUATION FORM

Date: _____

Name: _____

Position: _____

Grade Level: _____

Subject: _____

Title of Unit: _____

Time Involved: in class: _____

in teacher preparation: _____

To assist in making future revisions, the Africa Project invites your comments.

1. What were your objectives in using the unit? Were they met?

2. How did you use the unit in your classroom? Did you omit any parts? If so, which ones and why? Did you add anything? If so, please explain.

3. Which parts of the unit did you find most helpful? Least helpful? Please explain.

4. How did your class react to the unit? Are there any interesting insights or creative ideas that you received from your students and would like to share?